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# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE

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LORD GORELL

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# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

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## A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE.

BY R. H. MOTTRAM.

### III. THE BEACH.

*[Frank Medway, a civil servant, Jaqueline, his wife, and their children, Ronnie (aged 16), Lina (15), Horace (10) and Sylvia (6), have just arrived at Bumphrey's, the old familiar house by the seaside, for their holiday. On the rail journey down they have unexpectedly met Wilfred and Isabel, husband and wife, known to each of them from their childhood's days together. Frank and Jaqueline talk over their old memories of these after settling into their lodgings.]*

WHEN Frank awoke, the sun was streaming through the wide gap made by drawing back the curtains. The room was flooded with honey-coloured light. Nor was it only his eyes that informed him that it was by now full morning. Through the open window came to him, borne upon the brisk air of the seaside summer, the sound of animals and men about at their occupations, the rattle of a delivery van, the distant whistle of a train. In the background a continuous rustling murmur was at once unfamiliar and welcome. Perhaps it was that which had at length awakened him. The sound of the sea.

He might have lain long enjoying it, and all it meant, had not more immediate rumour intruded. Jaqueline's voice :

'Horace, will you come down?'

'Says you!'

Frank threw aside the clothes and began to dress himself with decision. He would not have Horace answer his parents like that. But he must shave. He could not appear before the children with a stubbly chin, though Jaqueline might have forgiven him on her private count. He was engaged in fixing up his special shaving mirror on the catch of the window (because at Bumphrey's, as in all other houses run by women, no means was provided for seeing both sides of one's face in any light that enabled one to shave symmetrically), when his daughter's voice hailed him from the foot of the stairs :

'Dad, Mum says shall she bring you up your breakfast?'

'No, I'm nearly ready. Tell Horace he's not to speak like that.'

Sounds of report being made, discussion, and that which the papers describe in brackets as 'some laughter.' Then, Lina's voice again:

'Mum says, won't you come and set an example?'

Dismounting his razor he thought:

'A bathroom at Bumphrey's! Progress? Boys answering their parents with Cinamericanisms. Progress? Wonder what the one has to do with the other.'

Before he found out, he had completed his toilet, his holiday toilet, his loose jacket with big pockets, his tennis shirt, flannel trousers, and canvas shoes, and feeling correspondingly enfranchised descended into Miss Lansdowne's front room.

The wide casement window, the porch opening straight on to the garden, and itself filled with those geraniums, lobelias, cacti and ferns that only flourish in tightly closed cottages, the low ceiling and intimidating black fireplace were all as they had ever been. Miss Lansdowne had evidently inherited from the Bumphrey's just in time to realise the value, the prestige of the old solid, nineteenth-century comfort. Even the chiffonier, with its wool mats and the engraving of the Crystal Palace, seemed unchanged. Had the elder Bumphrey attended the Exhibition in a top-hat and tails, open-mouthed, and . . .

'Frank, do sit down and have breakfast.'

'I've finished my porridge.' Sylvia was showing her plate.

'Pooh, I've finished my bacon too,' from Horace.

'Now, children, none of this competitive feeling.'

'It gets things done, anyhow,' murmured Jaqueline, busy behind an enormous worsted tea-cosy. 'A nice state of affairs when children have to bring up their father!'

Frank accepted the gibe in the spirit in which it was meant. Jaqueline was enjoying seeing him enjoy himself, often drew a tragi-comic picture of herself as a pathetic widow with four children, having lost her husband through overwork. She gloried in having let him oversleep himself, in his ostentatiously 'holiday' clothes, in the festive air he couldn't keep out of his face. She was right. He was going to enjoy himself. He was going to eat as much as he could. He was going to smoke a pipe with his hands in his pockets. He would take the children down to the beach. He would sit on the breakwater and smoke another pipe. He would

feel the breeze on his cheek, the sand and shingle beneath his feet. He might even play a game if he were asked. He would see what sort of a hut now belonged to Bumphrey's. There, with a delicious reluctance he would take off all his clothes and put on his navy-blue costume and plunge himself in that dark green, foam-laced tide, he would splash and rinse himself in its healing briny freshness. He would watch the children swim and hold up the heads of the young ones who couldn't. Then he would go out, dry himself, smoke a pipe seven times more delicious than the previous ones. Then he would come back to Bumphrey's, eat a lot, drink beer or cider, and go to sleep for an hour. That was as far as he wanted to see, at the moment. He would do that. He had a strong suspicion that he would go on doing it for as many days as the weather, or the holidays, lasted. But that didn't matter. He would do it now for the first time for twelve months, the first time for more than twelve years at this dear old Beckhythe to which he had returned after so many years of neglect. And the surface of his skin would get all smooth and glossy and dark golden brown, his eyes regain their blue colour, the nick where his glasses rode on the bridge of his nose would disappear, he wouldn't brush his hair, or put on a tie, or care a damn about anything. Inside him an exactly parallel process would go on. His brain, the whole interior of his head, the nerves that ran to his finger-tips and tingled when doors were banged would also get smooth and glossy and brown or whatever was the proper equivalent for that. Then he suddenly recollected. It wasn't only his holiday, and of course, the children's. It was Jaqueline's as well.

'Can't you come down to the beach this morning?' he almost implored her. He added with urgency: 'I shall enjoy it so much more if you do!'

She shook her head, smiling, not averse to hearing that note in his voice.

'I must see Miss Lansdowne. But I may get down later on. Take my costume and air it.'

So forth they sallied. Ronnie had brought an iron and the more worn of the golf balls to practise strokes. Lina was carrying a bulky bundle of rugs and towels. Caps and slippers filled his own pockets as being the more perishable of the bathing outfit. Lina had the bright idea of winding two costumes in a turban each for Horace and Sylvia. That would be a means of getting him, and therefore her, past the shop. Sylvia had already developed strong views on the equality of the sexes. The little ones had the

regulation spades and pails, and he was just issuing a proclamation to the effect that if either of them fell over their spades, or used the pail for catching shell fish or other living things and letting them die in the hut, the said spades and pails would be summarily removed, when Horace stopped dead.

'Oo!'

'What's the matter?'

'Stomach-ache!'

'Would you like to go back or wait until we get down to the beach.'

'Tisn't that sort of stomach-ache!'

'Of course it isn't,' cried Lina. 'It's that stupid belt you've pulled so tight that it nearly strangles you in the middle!'

'Tisn't!'

'Yes, it is. Here, let me loosen it.'

'Why don't Horace have elastic, like me?' from Sylvia.

'Why doesn't Horace, you mean, dear.'

'Wouldn't be seen dead with elastic. It's only fit for kiddy girls.'

'Why can't I have a belt like Horace?'

'There,' Lina drew herself up and resumed her bundle, 'now you'll feel better!'

'No,' growled Horace, 'I don't. My bags'll come down now. You've made it too loose!'

'Then why don't you wear braces?'

'Pooh! braces!'

'Exactly,' Frank thought to himself, 'don't I remember the prestige of a belt!' No soldier, sailor, explorer, cowboy, bandit ever wore braces. They were comic. The sailorman in *Just So Stories*, old labourers and other butts wore them. The real man liked to feel tight about the middle. He himself had ceased to bother, had been sickened of belts in the War. Not so Horace.

'Then you must hold your trousers up,' Lina was saying.

But Frank knew that on the first possible occasion Horace would tighten his belt again, at no matter what discomfort. He had no time, however, to complete his philosophy of braces. The houses each side of the narrow street came to an abrupt end. Here they were. The keen air whipped his blood.

'Come along,' he cried as if he could not descend the driftway quick enough. He picked up Sylvia and set her on his shoulder.

Lina went skittering ahead with dancing steps, down the loose surface of sand and pebbles.

Ronnie quickened his pace suddenly in long loping strides. Young Horace just ran.

'Which is ours?' Lina was asking.

'Ve one wif ve red top!' commanded Sylvia, relapsing under the stress of excitement into the imperfections of speech she had overcome.

'Gad, what a mob!' commented Ronnie.

'There are a lot more huts than there used to be,' Frank was bound to admit. It struck him with dismay. He had pictured to himself the sand, the sea, the sky above and the cliff behind, all at the disposal of himself and his family. In the late afternoon of the day before, people had mostly gone up for tea, and the place had seemed deserted enough. This morning, land and water alike were dotted with figures in bright-coloured costumes, kicking, rolling or flinging large or small balls, trailing indiarubber animals, digging the sand or splashing in the waves, while seagulls screeched and dogs barked.

'Number forty-nine,' he read from the label attached to the key with which Miss Lansdowne had provided him, as if he hoped that this evidence of proprietorship amid so many staked claims would reassure him. It was some distance along to the right. As they quested he glanced at the elder children to see how they reacted to the scene. Ronnie was regarding the other holiday-makers with keen criticism. Lina was smiling already the woman's smile of social facility. She would accommodate herself to circumstances, or rather circumstances to herself. With the younger ones it was easier. Once he had discovered the number and turned the key in the lock, they rushed in.

Horace stood, with legs apart and eyes protruding with satisfaction. In all the places to which he so longed to go, from the Backwoods to the Antarctic upon which his young imagination had been fed by the special literature poured out for the edification of his kind, people always lived in huts. It was an ambition realised.

Sylvia had already been charmed by the interior with its seats and lockers, chairs and curtains.

'This is going to be my house!' she declared roundly, 'a nice little house. I'm going to sweep it!' and suited the action to the word, using her spade.

Ronnie was still looking somewhat dubiously at the beach which seemed to him unduly congested.

'Too many people about just here,' Frank hastened to

suggest. 'We'll go along to Smugglers' Leap presently, and have a knock!'

'Smugglers?' Horace queried, all agog. It was better than he had expected.

'You can come too and I'll show you where the Smugglers used to jump off the cliff when they were pursued!'

Lina, meanwhile, with businesslike housewifeliness, had unstrapped her bundle, and was opening windows, hanging garments on pegs, disposing impedimenta. Among other things, out fell an old second-rate cricket bat, deemed fit to risk the wear and tear of the sands, and an indiarubber ball.

Ronnie possessed himself of these, with an air of professional competence that made Frank grin. He addressed his brother:

'Come on, Kid, I'll give you a ball or two.' And off they went to mark out a pitch and construct extemporary stumps with spades and sticks.

'Sylvia, you can keep wicket. You shall have an innings presently if you play up!'

To Frank's satisfaction his son's voice, now gruff, now shrill, could be heard instructing the young:

'Keep y' bat straight. Keep your foot still. Sorry, that wasn't much of a one. Sylvia, put your legs together, how do you expect to stop 'em?'

With Lina busy about the hut, this gave him the short respite he desired. Sitting on the steps, he refilled his pipe and proceeded to adjust himself to the circumstances, which, as ever, had failed to turn out as he had imagined them. Of course, it was ridiculous to expect to find Beckhythe as he first remembered it, or even as it had been until after the War. Of course he had no vested interest in the place. Other people were free to come there if they could afford it, and he ought to be pleased at these signs of prosperity. That wasn't it. With growing children you wanted to know with whom they were going to associate, and under what influences their minds were being formed. The meeting with his own childhood's companions the day before had brought this vividly to his mind. He wondered what Jaqueline would say of this beach where it was hardly possible to play a game without rubbing shoulders with people you didn't know. Already Ronnie bowling, and Horace and then Sylvia batting had attracted three or four curious little sight-seers. Ronnie could perhaps be trusted. His school-taught standards, if narrow, were at least high. Lina could be trusted. She had her mother's sheer sense. But Horace and Sylvia?



There they were, pausing in their instruction in the national game, to stare, as shy young animals will, at these other young animals of their own age, who were staring at them.

'Oh, well caught!' Ronnie conceded, as one of the strange little boys smartly held a ball that Horace had caused to rise unnecessarily from his bat.

'Oh, well caught!' echoed Sylvia, imitating her big brother with the fatal certainty of a younger following his elder.

What to do? If disapproval of these rapidly caught-up acquaintances were shown, there would be no telling to what length Horace might go:

'Clear out, you kids, we don't want you!' would not be in the least beyond his capabilities. Frank's good-natured tolerance shrank from it. Well, they couldn't take anything catching in this fresh air.

Then, as if in answer to his mute appeal, a firm light step upon the shingle, a shadow on his face caused him to look up. It was Jacqueline. They smiled at each other:

'Our family seem to be a shocial shuccess!' He tried to propitiate her with comedy.

'They take after their father,' she countered. 'Are we really brave enough to bathe do you think?'

It seemed to him simply heaven-sent.

'Let's.'

'Very well. I'm no waterfunk,' and as though she feared that her courage might ooze away, she rose and drew the curtain that divided the hut from the door to the back. 'Who wants to bathe?'

Pleasant, the alacrity with which they came, the boys to his side of the curtain, the girls to hers. It was one of the family jokes to refer to an ancient illustration in a worn and dilapidated volume of *Punch* that had brightened the bedtime and side-tracked the sorrows of all four children by its delineation of the boy of the 'fifties,' 'Master Frankie' fighting against the ministrations of the bathing woman of the period. Point was lent to the jest by the coincidence of the name. But what a jest it was! None of his children fought against cold water. As for the sea—they loved it, and all swam, except Sylvia, who was trying now that Horace could keep himself going for ten strokes.

Then all other feelings were ousted by that annually recurring miracle that made all sorts of half-forgotten biblical tags surge up in his mind. All those phrases about being washed clean, baptised

with water, about the sea and Leviathan, happy monster, suddenly, as always, took on a freshness and meaning that never failed.

When he strode into the gently frothing breakers, the stain of town life, and indoor occupation, mainly mental, dropped from him, as, a moment before, he had dropped his clothes on the locker. There it was, once more, the finest view in all the world, the boundless blue horizon seen with eyes that were from three to six inches above the water, and frequently dashed with spray.

After that he was a different man. By the time Ronnie and Lina had been prevailed to come back inshore (they were at the stage at which no swim that did not take them out of their depth was worth swimming) and Horace and Sylvia had had such assistance as they required, he and Jaqueline had well earned a moment of floating, side by side, their eyes on the sky, their toes sticking up before them.

'I was quite worried,' he confided to her, 'by the number of people who have discovered the place. Considering that it hasn't and can't be built up, one wonders where they all manage to lodge.'

'Some don't, nowadays. There's an excellent 'bus service Miss Lansdowne tells me. Numbers come down for a few hours and have a hut. She doesn't mind. She's let throughout the season. The shop likes it, of course, and the fishermen. And, after all, if a 'bus service fills up the sands a bit, it's a great resource on a wet day. And you're never safe from the weather here, are you? Do you remember wet days at the sea?'

'Don't I? Wasn't it Llanfarbach where we had that awful wet spell? And ours were all several sizes too small for lodgings. Ronnie was ten, I suppose, not out of the awkward age, Lina not big enough to be any good. Sylvia couldn't walk. You had to keep picking her off the furniture.'

'You were a brick, Frank, you walked them about in the wet, and I dried them when they came in. Yes, the west coast!'

'Here we are more likely to get horribly cold grey days, when the beach is no good. Not so much wet though.'

'Well, anyhow, there's the 'bus. If it does turn out bad we can take them to the pictures.'

'We've got enough games to hold 'em for a bit. No, it isn't that so much. What do we do if they make attachments we don't like? They're no longer at the stage at which you can fetch them in to tea if they pick up with people who are not our sort!'

'Oh, Frank, where are your democratic principles?'

'Nowhere, when it comes to my children getting mixed up



with the new rich. That's not democracy. It's post-War careerism.'

'You don't mind if they pick up a fisherman or two.'

'Not in the least. Tar will come off . . .'

('I wonder if Miss Lansdowne has turps in the house. Bound to have. Glad you made me think of it!') put in Jacqueline.)

' . . . vulgarity and pretentiousness don't.'

'But what makes you think that those qualities will stick to our children?'

'Nothing. Except that they're very sticky and children are very impressionable!'

'We must go out and dress,' she cut him short, as after a few easy strokes she put down her feet and proceeded to wade out, saying thoughtfully:

'Ronnie? No. Too particular. Lina? No. Particular another way. The babes . . . oh, they still can be told off.'

Which confirmation of his own feelings comforted Frank greatly.

'I must be essentially a marine animal,' he told Jacqueline. 'Vitality goes up, from contact with cold water, and the hard exercise of swimming and iodine and stuff one absorbs, and the effect on me is that I simply don't feel what usually annoys me.'

'Water in the ears,' murmured she, intent on what she was doing. 'Voices don't penetrate as they did. You're too sensitive to contacts.'

'It's only partly that. It's going back to the sub-vegetable state. I could sit here for hours, eating whenever anything edible came near enough, and just existing.'

'There are some ginger-snaps in the locker. Lina rescued the packet from Horace.'

'There can be few better daughters than Lina!' He reached back, secured the packet, and removing his pipe, put a ginger-snap in his mouth whole.

'There are few bigger, for her age. She'll simply have to have some new things when we get home. The little they need to wear here has made what she has on possible for four weeks. But they won't mend!'

'What did people used to do? Families of seven or eight used to be dressed on less than we spend on four, even allowing for the altered value of money.'

'That's an easy one. Children used to be dressed in what their parents could afford, not what they needed. Materials were

heavier and coarser, far less comfortable or suitable, but more mendable. And children—girls most certainly didn't use their clothes so strenuously. Do you know what we used to do in the mid-morning break at Miss Frost's ?'

'Indulge in mild gossip ?'

'Yes, but how ? Walking solemnly round the garden, in twos and threes. Round and round.'

'Did you, though ? 'Tisn't credible.'

'Of course, that's the very earliest I remember. Once Miss Frost retired and Miss Harrison replaced her, we had games, and very soon a proper period of physical training once a week.'

'My dear, that was one of the unnamed epoch-making transitions of history. From it proceeded the blue-serge knickers, with elastic at the knee.'

'Quite true. And loose tunics went with them. You couldn't do physical jerks trussed up as we once were.'

'No. And then began the enquiry as to whether stays were good for you. That altered the whole object of women's clothes, and the attitude towards women. The daughters of gentlemen became girls, lady preceptresses became women teachers. You ceased to be frail creatures.'

'We began to be less dependent.'

'The old cotton drawers with frills were the badge of servitude. Like the paper decoration of a ham-bone, they only served as garnish.'

'Really, Frank !'

'Tell me some more about your days at Miss Frost's. I didn't know half-enough about you then. Did Isabel take kindly to physical jerks ?'

'Is it my past you're interested in, or Isabel's ?'

'Both, my dear. The young creature of that day, what did she think about and talk about. Is my daughter to-day so much nicer than daughters were then, as she seems to me to be ?'

'So much less sentimental !'

'Did you have love affairs, real or imaginary ?'

'Formally rather. I don't know what the others did . . .'  
(Frank made an involuntary movement. Perhaps he did know. Why had he let this subject come up ?) ' . . . but we were all supposed to be full of love. There were our religious exercises with a sort of abstract love of our Saviour, as he was always called, there was a reserve of love which we were engaged in accumulating to squander on a prospective husband. And there was always love of babies, whenever we could get near one. Naturally !'

But Frank had suddenly remembered a *per contra*, a set-off, a justification.

'What about Bernard?'

'I had no feelings about Bernard one way or another.'

'No, but had he?'

'I'm sure I don't know.'

'Come, Jaqueline, at what age does a good-looking girl begin to be conscious of very obvious admiration from a boy of her own age?'

'Do you mean me?'

'You know I do.'

'Oh, thank you so much.'

'Well, when does she?'

'There's no rule. It's all sub-conscious; there, but not recognised. It's more serious than with men. Girls never were really frivolous, they were taught to pretend they were, and they had nothing else to do. Once Miss Harrison became the Head, though, I, at least, had enough to think about. Bernard was a nice boy, of course, but he made no deep impression.'

'It doesn't cause your heart to beat when I tell you he's in the family living, somewhere quite near here?'

'Not a bit. But what fun! Of course he belonged to these parts more than you or I.'

'I'll find out where he is, and we'll get him over to tea!'

'Yes, we might. I suppose I shall know him again. I'm grieved to say I have some difficulty in remembering what he was like. But I never took much stock even of you, then, did I?'

'So far as I know, much less than I did of you.'

'What a risk!'

'The very thing I was thinking.'

They thought no more. There was a pattering of feet, a spurt of flying sand, a chorus of eager young voices:

'Can I go shrimping with Bunjie?'

'Can I go too?'

'Who's Bunjie?'

'This is!'

Bunjie stared widely out of grey-blue eyes, and stood solid on pretty good legs. Woollen jersey and flannel trousers were sensible and well kept.

'How will you know when it's time to come back for dinner?'

'Oh, we shall know.'

'Will Bunjie know?'

Bunjie nodded.

'How?'

He produced a large plain watch. Lina, who had come up, looked over his shoulder and chuckled.

'Not going,' she indicated to her mother.

'What about a few strokes, now?' Ronnie strolled towards them, self-possessed. Frank rose to his feet. Not for anything would he let Ronnie down, and cricket, apparently, was finished.

'You can go shrimping if you keep in the direction of Smugglers' Leap. Ronnie and I will be somewhere thereabouts. When we call you must come.'

That was that. A careful tucking up of knickers and away went the shrimpers. Between strokes, Frank and Ronnie could see them, patrolling the shifting margin of the ebb.

True to his forecast that morning became as it were the standard morning. He could not have enough of it, the carefree heart, the clear head, the brisk appetite. But should it be conceivably possible to tire of that for variety there were those deep blue-green woods that cut Beckhythe from the rest of the county, where under arches of old trees, between solid walls of rhododendrons the distant sea was speedwell blue. Or there were long sun-baked afternoons on the short-turfed cliff-top, pursuing the white ball from green to green, among men of his own age and sort; from which return to the chatter and bustle of the family tea-table was but exchanging one delight for another.

Then, suddenly as ever, for he had never grown accustomed to such changes, he woke one morning, feeling chilled to the bone. The curtains were bent inward from the windows by a steady breeze that made a soft roaring in the chimney and trailed long streamers of vapour across the dimmed outline of wood and cliff.

'No day for the beach,' Jaqueline decided over breakfast. The children did not seem greatly perturbed. When he answered:

'What shall we do, then?' ideas flowed:

'A ride in the 'bus,' was Sylvia's contribution.

'Go and see the waves breaking over Shipton pier. I bet I can stand by the flagstaff longest.'

'Lina and I would like to have a look at the shops,' from their mother.

'All right.' Horace began organising at once, 'So you can. Dad can take us on the pier.'

'Thank you very much,' Frank hastened to interpose. 'How wet may you get?'

'Oh, macintoshes and gumboots and sou'westers, of course, if they're going to play that game. And remember, Horace, if you fall off, your father's not to jump in after you!'

'Pooh, I shan't fall in.'

'Nor push Sylvia in.'

'I wouldn't mind!' stoutly, from the victim indicated.

'You would when the shrimps began to nibble your toes.'

Open-mouthed, Sylvia regarded her elder sister with eyes in which bravado struggled to maintain itself against such terrors. Seeing that a sufficient cautionary note had been struck, Jacqueline rose.

'Then get your things on. Lucky we had the joint yesterday. Miss Lansdowne will be able to give us sandwiches. If it doesn't clear up we might get tea there somewhere.'

An hour later, his pipe reeking comfortably between the points of his upturned collar, Frank was wedged in the corner of the outermost shelter on Shipton pier. The whole edifice was alive. Every pane of glass seemed to bulge with the presence of the wind, the woodwork was creaking, the halyards whipped the flagstaff, and periodically the platform shook under the assault of the larger seas. Horace and Sylvia, with shrieks of agonised delight, were rushing back from the flagstaff to him, or stanchly clinging to the butt of the post, when the spray bespattered the streaming boards, as though flung from a bucket.

'What was it your science mistress told you about the marine origin of all life?' he demanded of Lina, who, with Ronnie, had just emerged from a sixpenny inspection, with official explanation, of the lifeboat and rocket apparatus in the adjoining building. 'I should think this is a day off for most marine life, isn't it?' and he nodded at the boiling, dirty-grey tumult before their feet, its confused meaningless violence and uproar.

'They go deep on days like this, don't they, Dad?'

'They must indeed. They don't suffer from lack of variety. Can you believe this is the same sea as yesterday?'

'Not easily. The keeper says that, in the old days, it often took them hours to launch the lifeboat. Now they've got petrol engines they're much better equipped.'

'Where's Ronnie?'

'Over there. He's spotted where they keep the speedboats on days like this, behind the breakwater. Here he comes.'

'Might have a trip in one of those, when it's fair,' was his conclusion.

'So long as you don't want to try to-day.'

Ronnie grinned.

Just then Frank was visited with one of his bright ideas :

'There's a notice up here somewhere about passenger flights from the aerodrome at Crofton. Would you like ten-bobs' worth ?'

He knew in a moment that he had shot up like a rocket in his eldest son's estimation. The eyes bent on him now had lost that critical tolerant look. Pleasurable anticipation, grateful respect and a touching confidence and helplessness were there instead.

'Didn't see that,' came the murmur. 'Don't know how much it'll be.'

'Never mind. I'm paying. Of course you're not to mention it to Horace.'

'Rather not.'

'I think it might be managed.'

'I say! Thanks most awfully.'

'Do you want to go, Lina ?'

'Don't think so, thanks. *Steward!*'

'Very well.' From the corner of his eye he saw relief inform his son's expression. The two elder children were good friends, but it was perhaps difficult for Ronnie to admit the participation of girls in his pursuits.

'Two—four—five,' came a quiet voice, as Jaqueline entered the shelter. 'No one drowned yet. Bravo, Frank, you're getting quite careful.'

He and Ronnie were both beaming at her.

'You look very pleased to see me. What's up ?'

'Dad says I can have a flight at Crofton.'

'I thought there was something.'

'It's quite safe, Mother.'

'Safe as Heaven.'

'I won't go if it gives you the kickers' (familiar for hysterics).

'No, you can go. As well that as another!'

With that cryptic utterance, she unpacked lunch.

By the time they had emptied the lunch basket, the weather, instead of improving, had become steadily worse. The vapour had thickened into drizzle, the drizzle into driving rain. There was nothing to be done in the open, and Frank whispered to Jaqueline :

'Pictures ?'

'Yes !'

'Wonder what there is ?'

'Ask them what they'd like.'



A moment of suspense and cogitation. To Frank's relief they plumped for a film that portrayed animals in the jungle. He could but applaud. Deep down in him was the Englishman's feeling for beasts, but indifferently satisfied by keeping a dog. Against all appearance to the contrary he could never quite make up his mind as to the selfishness of it. Then these beasts in the pictures were only being photographed, not butchered. And how much better they took than any humans ever could. If only those who made films would photograph men and women in that unselfconscious state! So for an hour and more they sat in the luminous darkness and watched great saurians, large carnivora, and all the humbler running, flying and swimming things portrayed on a background of jungle. He peered at the four young faces in the half-light. Ronnie's had relaxed something of its half-comic austerity. He seemed to approve, and from approval slipped into sheer interest. That was how they worked it! he seemed to say to himself. With Lina, it was simpler. She had her mother's capacity for forgetting herself in other creatures' affairs. The lumbering of bears and elephants, the leap of the hunting species, the swift darting of winged or finned life was as real to her as if she had been participating in the photography.

To Horace it was all a game, one at which he was playing himself in imagination, one at which he could nearly play in reality. His eyes stared, his fingers twitched, handling a non-existent gun. How gleefully he would have 'potted' all the lot, large animals and small. He displayed in miniature the urge to conquer and possess at the uncounted cost of destroying. When some smooth or crumpled hide slid between grasses or along the water's edge, he stood up from his seat involuntarily, his tongue clicked against his teeth to mark the moment when his finger should have pressed the trigger.

Yet other were Sylvia's sensations. Her reception of those images varied from the condescension of the owner of pets, to the swift alarm as some not-too-familiar form suddenly enlarged as it approached the camera, and seemed about to crash from the screen into the auditorium. Early in the performance she sought her mother's knee, and Horace's muffled reproach:

'They aren't real, silly—worse luck!' was not sufficiently convincing to dislodge her.

Above them Jaqueline brooded, seldom looking at the screen herself, and then only with the remoteness of those who witness such things as a momentary change from serious and chosen occupation.

When they had seen their fill and Jaqueline and Frank had agreed by signs that it was time to think about tea, they emerged into rain coming down faster than ever.

'Nothing for it. 'Bus home, change and have tea there,' Jaqueline decided, and along the sluicing pavements they splashed.

'Mind, Sylvia,' Frank had just said, conscious that a large car slid along the kerb at their elbows, when a voice hailed them from the window of it:

'In you get!'

Turning dumbfounded, his glance met that of Wilfred's prominent, jocularly assertive, blue eyes. From behind that face, enjoying its perpetual spree, Isabel's arm reached out to unlatch the second door.

'Our feet are dripping,' protested Jaqueline.

'Then don't stand about in the rain!' retorted Wilfred. It was convincing. They crowded in. Wilfred unswitched an emergency seat for the big children, the little ones squeezed in beside their parents, the door was banged and the princely machine moved off.

'It's very good of you, Isabel,' Jaqueline hastened to say. 'I'm afraid we shall make your car in a dreadful mess.'

'Don't think about that,' was the reply.

'Purchaser's look-out,' Wilfred added. 'We've sold it.'

'You haven't been long, have you?'

'Course I haven't. Think I've got a safe job to go to sleep on like you!'

'Are you all right?' from Isabel.

'Wallowing in unaccustomed luxury, thanks.'

Horace added: 'You bet,' but caught Ronnie's eye and did not further improve the subject.

'Wilfred, where are we going?'

'To our pub to have tea, unless you prefer a drink.'

'Thanks, it's awfully good of you, but if you'd run us to the 'bus-stop, that would . . .'

'I shall do nothing of the sort. Some hopes, after not havin' seen you all these years!'

('Sure thing,' contributed Horace.)

'We're at the Royal Pavilion,' Isabel added, as if to reassure.

'I don't know what they'll say when they see us.' Jaqueline regarded her useful macintosh, skirt and jumper.

'You shall have a private room if you like,' Wilfred flung over his shoulder, 'but tea in the lounge is more fun. More lively!'



It was. Borne along helpless to the giant caravanserai, they had every opportunity to appreciate Wilfred's way with such places. Waiters kept their eye on him, put two tables together under his direction, found chairs. Tea came at once. Hot toast and a dish of sugary buns that kept Horace literally speechless. Frank was gratified to see how well the elder children adjusted themselves to these circumstances to which they certainly were unaccustomed, and Jaqueline looked after Sylvia. Isabel had seated herself between Ronnie and Lina, and could be heard devoting herself to the former, asking about his school.

'Isabel doesn't alter!' Frank thought, 'anything in trousers will do. But she's made a mistake in the subject. It's the last thing Ronnie's likely to talk about.'

He appeared to be wrong, though. Ronnie was answering Isabel's questions with charmingly naïve if laborious particularity. Under Isabel's melting glances he seemed years younger. His prefect's *morgue* dropped from him. No suspicion of the fact that Isabel was not interested in his education, but only in keeping his attention.

'And she knows how to do it. Good marks for her. I didn't think she could spellbind that generation as she did the last. Of course she looks extraordinarily young, and her intense preoccupation with herself hasn't aged.'

'Frank,' Wilfred's irresistible, unquenchable voice interrupted his thoughts, 'I call it *scandalous*, your not having a car! Ain't it, Jaqueline?'

He answered his wife's indulgent smile that embraced him as if she had stroked his cheek, saying: 'Go on being "boys together" with him. You don't often get the chance. Does you good!' before he replied:

'What should I do with a car?'

'Do with it. Why, drive Jaqueline and the kiddies about in it. At least I should. Of course, some people use 'em to keep chickens in, or shave with the wind-screen for looking-glass.'

('Hush, dear, you'll choke,' murmured Jaqueline to young Horace who had gone into fits of laughter with his mouth full of cake.)

'But I can't afford it, Wilfred.'

'Oh, listen to the poor old thing.' Wilfred appealed to Jaqueline and the children with a semicircular glance, and returned to Frank with a mock-hectoring-magisterial tone.

'Did you ever hear of the instalment system?'

'Yes, but I don't like it.'

'Ha. Now we're getting down to brass tacks. Do you know anything about it?'

'Not much, no!'

'There, what did I tell you,' Wilfred was once more addressing the public, 'and didn't poor old Satan Anguish try to teach you Latin?'

'What's that got to do with it?'

'Everything. He taught you what instalment signified. And you've forgotten.'

Wilfred let his voice sink more in sorrow than in anger.

'What have I forgotten?'

'In, inter, means inside, don't it?—stal from Latin stallo, a shed or garage—ment is a possessive noun meaning "got it."—Instalment—Isn't that right, Horace?' which sent Horace into further fits, and Frank was obliged to join in. The same silly old Wilfred.

'You pay your first instalment, and you get your car. You have it and you use it. Your wife and children are dee-lighted. Aren't you?' he turned to the children.

'You've said it,' from Horace. But even Lina, while suppressing her brother, added:

'Oh, Dad, do!'

Alarmed at the desertion of his elder daughter, so often his ally, he turned in distress to Jaqueline. To his further discomfort, she seemed to be pondering Wilfred's approaches. Dark-eyed and nursing a chin in her hand, she regarded Wilfred.

'How much does it cost to run a car?'

'Depends on how much you use it. But any self-respecting 'bus can be kept for fifty a year. Your girl could drive it, and I'd see you got a good one. And I'd do the insurance for you.'

That was the difficulty about Wilfred. He was so transparent. He wanted a deal. He intended to make a bit. You might be his oldest friend, but you were also the latest opportunity. But it was all so plain, how could you be angry with him? Impossible to accuse him of deceit. There he sat, having filled your children up with cake, his knees apart, his forearms resting on his fat thighs, looking up at you with his fatuous grin. If he'd had the sense to try and understand Jaqueline, he would have found a precious aid at the moment. Frank knew how bitterly she resented not being able to have all the small alleviations of life, a car, more frocks, longer and more elaborate holidays. She couldn't be content with

a pipe and a round of golf, as he could. She wanted things and steadily denied herself, in order to pay for children's education. She sat there, stonily silent, before Wilfred, keeping back Frank alone knew what feelings. It was kinder to explode the gaff:

'Are you an agent for some company?'

Wilfred put on an expression that Frank remembered well from the old days. Accused of being found in a portion of the school buildings in which he had no business, Wilfred had once faced enquiry with the words:

'Oh, sir, how could you suspect me of that,' so barefacedly uttered that the Head had been about to let him off, when the kind-hearted Mrs. Plummer, the housekeeper, quite misreading the weighted silence into which she had inadvertently broken by hurrying into the room, gave the whole show away by exclaiming:

'Lor', sir, don't be 'ard on Deever, sir, he didn't mean any harm by what he did.'

Circumstances had altered, but not Wilfred.

'Agent!' he repeated. 'Whatever made you think I was an agent? D'you suppose I want to make commission out of you?'

'Oh no, Wilfred, but I didn't quite understand how you came to be mixed up in the business, if you're not an agent.'

'I'm tied up to no firm,' Wilfred explained. 'But I know something about cars. Since the slump, quite a number of very good cars have been coming on the market, dirt cheap. You can quite understand that. Suppose you had bought a car from the makers—at the works—say; then you die or you go to India. You can't take the car with you in either case, can you now?'

Jaqueline had gone into a brown study. Isabel and Ronnie were conversing with apparently mutual interest. The other children were regarding Wilfred, with all the eyes they could spare from their plates, as well they might anyone who seemed to them to spend his life juggling with motor-cars. Compared with a father who disappeared regularly every day at a stated hour to a little understood place known as 'the office,' about which the plainest thing was that their living was derived from it, and that it tired him out, Wilfred, ensconced in this large, brightly decorated, substantially furnished hotel, where he had only to ring a bell or cry 'Hi, George' to a waiter who wore evening dress in the middle of the day, in order to cause plates full of scones, cake and pastries to be brought, seemed to them an entirely novel combination of Santa Claus and Aladdin.

'No, I suppose you can't,' Frank was bound to answer, laugh-

ing. The assurance, the sublime assumption of laying all his cards upon the table, of putting a good bargain in your way without a thought for himself, and living all the time like the birds or the lilies of scripture was too compelling.

'Very well, then.' Wilfred drew down his brows with the serious air of one who has just demonstrated an abstruse mathematical proposition, 'that's how I'm able to make you offers you couldn't get elsewhere.'

As though he didn't feel this sufficiently convincing, he added :

'And, as I said, I can always arrange about payment. All you've got to do is to find the initial sum.'

'Wilfred, you're a regular philanthropist.'

'I know I am,' came the reply in a tone of modesty deprecating true worth. 'I oughtn't to do it.' Then, more sharply : 'Well, what about it ?'

'No good. It's very kind of you, but we've not sufficient use for a car, for my daily jaunt to the office and the children's to school. Ronnie's away already and Lina may go if she gets a scholarship. That reduces car-outings to pure luxury, week-ends and holidays. And you can't drive about the country with a family.'

'Just listen to him !' Wilfred appealed to that very family. 'Why, it's the very thing for 'em—isn't it ?'

Squeaks and giggles of appreciation, and Jaqueline's silent, stoic regret for the things they couldn't have.

'However you can resist these dear little children beats me,' Wilfred pressed on. 'I couldn't. However, there it is.' He was evidently not despairing, but just recoiling for a fresh attack. Before Frank could forestall it, he had turned to the younger ones. 'Have some more chocolate biscuits, Jimmy.' This was to Sylvia, who immediately grabbed one.

'Wilfred, Wilfred,' Jaqueline protested with that half-softened voice she could not quite control to those who gave Sylvia pleasure. 'She'll come out in spots. You aren't used to little girls, anyone can see.'

'What family have you got ?' Frank put in.

'One. She's away at school,' was the reply, as who should say, 'I've left my bag in the cloakroom.' 'What do spots matter, so long as you get chocolate biscuits with 'em. Eh, Jimmy ?'

'You mustn't call me Jimmy,' Sylvia protested, highly delighted, 'my name's Miss Sylvia Medway !'

'Just fancy that. What do you like best, Miss Sylvia, beside chocolate biscuits ?'

'O—er,' Sylvia was evidently searching her mind for that one of her many desires that would stretch adequately the bounty of this newly found Uncle. Frank was both urged to cut in before she demanded either some enormity and made Jaqueline blush for her, or thought of something easy that would make possible more of this simple spoiling that rendered it difficult to shake Wilfred off. He remembered just in time.

'By the way, Wilfred, I've promised my big boy a fly in these tame aeroplanes. Where does one book?'

'They'll do it for you here if I tell 'em!' and he called a waiter. Apparently tickets were on sale at the office.

'Come on, boy.' Wilfred rose, and, brushing cigarette ash from his waistcoat, haled Ronnie away. The boy went with a dazed look but muttered comprehension as Frank put a treasury note into his hand. That seemed the signal for a move. Jaqueline took Sylvia off to wash the chocolate from her face. Lina and Horace went to retrieve the family wraps.

Frank was left alone, for the first time for all those years, with Isabel. He was conscious of something stirring inside him and thought she was not unmoved. Extremely well turned-out, she smiled her lazy smile at him but said nothing more lethal than:

'Do you play bridge, Frank?'

'Have done. But not professionally, as I expect they do here'—he surveyed the lounge. But his eyes came back to her.

'I expect that's modesty.' The unsaid conclusion: 'There are other games to play,' was imminent but unuttered. Instead she said:

'That's a charming boy of yours. A signed copy of you at that age.'

'He's mainly Jaqueline's boy,' Frank fenced.

'Of course,' Isabel responded warmly, 'but there are recognisable qualities. I ought to know,' she added boldly, looking him in the eyes, and as it were, displaying herself.

('She needn't bother,' Frank thought to himself, but aloud he answered:)

'Yes. It's a long while ago, isn't it?'

'Depends. You've not aged.'

'Neither have you,' he couldn't but admit.

She smiled as if it were not obvious. He hastily went on:

'Did you know that Bernard was a parson hereabout!' The gleam of interest that lit her face he attributed to some recollection

of Bernard's marked preference for Jaqueline and almost openly shown distaste for herself. But she asked:

'No, that's news. Whereabouts?'

'No farther than Crofton. You might call on him,' he added, not without slight malice. ('You'll get a frigid reception,' he thought to himself.) He was astonished to hear her say:

'Yes, we might do that. What a gathering of the clans! It makes one younger.'

'Seeing Wilfred again would make anyone feel younger.'

'Wilfred's all right,' with a faint shrug.

Never did Frank more fervently thank his stars than at that moment. Somehow that insignificant gesture summed up all he suspected about their life together—hers and Wilfred's, thank the Lord, not hers and his. The hardness of it all, the everlasting skating along so as to take the least possible trouble, changing suddenly to single-minded dexterous grabbing when it was a question of money. No love, a sort of affection born of custom, an alliance of wits against all the world. Shamed by the feeling that she had paid for his tea and that, first and last he had really done nothing but help her to have the feelings she had, he tried vaguely to be nice, despite his sensation of distaste.

'You're looking splendid. What do you do to keep so young?'

'You've not lost the trick of making pretty speeches.'

'Sorry. I didn't mean it like that. And I did mean, what do you do?'

Isabel seemed doubtful.

'There's always tennis. Do you play?'

'Golf is my game.'

'I play golf too.'

That was unfortunate. He wasn't going to take her round the course while Jaqueline, who had given up golf when they married, minded the children, and he could think of nothing to fill the pause that yawned across the conversation. Inevitably she broke it:

'You play tennis when you're asked out?'

'My dear Isabel, we aren't asked out. I go to the office every weekday of my life except these four weeks, which are my regulation holiday. They aren't even that for Jaqueline.'

'You keep her well down to her job, don't you?'

'I think we like it so. The time never seems long on our hands anyhow. With the children there's always plenty to occupy the mind. . . .' What else could he say? He felt she was still fish-



ing for an invitation to play golf, and he wasn't going to give it. He wished Jaqueline and Wilfred would hurry up. Before he could think, Isabel said :

'Does Ronnie play tennis?'

'Yes. Isn't it astonishing! You'd think that at Bullingham they were kept busy with cricket and football. But they seem to get in tennis as well now. I don't know how far it's a substitute for racquets and fives and whatever it is one expects boys at Bullingham to play, in their spare time as it were. He's pretty good, I should say. These young things keep so fit, don't they? Lina's another. Plays tennis, I don't know how many times a week, from the end of one hockey season to the beginning of the next. . . .'

'I didn't know there were any courts at Beckhythe?'

'There aren't. But so far there have been no complaints on that score. Swimming and interfering with fishermen, and—oh, well, you know how one puts in fine mornings on the beach. Almost an orgy of everything except organised games. This is our first wet day. Haven't we been lucky?' ('If I only go on long enough either Jaqueline or Wilfred must come back. If they don't I'll just leave her standing here. I didn't bargain for this *tête-à-tête* and I'm not going to accept all sorts of invitations,' he told himself, conscious that Isabel was by no means without powers of attraction, still, and that she was using them.)

'What a pity,' Isabel was saying, and he noticed an increased assertiveness in her tone, 'he oughtn't to miss his game. We could give him a game. They've made very good hard courts here and some under cover. Let him come and play with us.'

'Does Wilfred still play?' but he knew he was 'putting it on.'

'When he's not busy.' ('That's a lie.' Frank felt instinctively doubtful of the statement, but not quite entitled to say so.) 'But there are always people about willing to make up a set. Let him come over . . .'

'It's very kind of you, I don't think he's got his things here.' Frank felt she did not believe him, and couldn't look at her. He could see in his mind's eye Ronnie's racquet, scrupulously screwed in its press and buttoned into its water-proof cover, in the space between the chest of drawers and the wall in the boys' bedroom at Bumphrey's.

'Let's ask Jaqueline.' Isabel was almost laughing at him, not in the least deceived.

Following her glance he saw Wilfred advancing towards them,

threading his way between tables and chairs, laying down the law about something to Ronnie, who, with a rather pretty assumption of full-grown manliness, had fallen into step beside him, hands in pocket, paying great attention.

'Look here, Frank,' Wilfred engaged him at a distance of some yards, 'these merchants have beggared the contract. One of their machines made a forced landing, and another's been taken down for re-rigging. They can't guarantee a flight before next Tuesday. . . .'

'Sorry, Ronnie,' Frank put in, hoping to end the conversation before Jaqueline heard about the forced landing.

Wilfred took him up with aggressive eyes and out-thrust under jaw.

'Sorry! Whatcher bein' sorry for? Think I'm goin' t' see the boy done out of his ride because the local ace oughter be pushing a pram instead of twiddlin' a joy-stick?'

He paused, but Frank remembered well that pause and knew it was unnecessary to interpose. He was right.

'No blinkin' fear. I've told 'em what I thought about their arrangements. And I've done more. I've found out when these speedboats go to Dodman's Point. He says they're nearly as good. In fact, you can all go there. Every week-day at ten-thirty, that'll fit your 'bus service. You can go when you like and come and have tea with us on the way back. How's that?'

Obviously it was to Wilfred's satisfaction. He felt he had done the kind thing. Moreover, it seemed to suit Ronnie as well. He grinned and nodded to his father, and was evidently quite pleased with the altered arrangements, and unwilling that Wilfred should feel let down.

'That's very good of you, Wilfred!' Frank now felt a little ashamed of many thoughts about his old schoolfellow that had passed through his mind. 'We might certainly do that. We'll see what the weather's like. If I remember, this northeaster lasts three days.'

'I hear you play tennis, Ronnie.' Isabel's voice floated past him as a whiff of scent from a perfumer's might have done. 'We could give you a game, any time when you're free. There are covered courts here, and if you can't go to the beach, you might care to come over.'

Ronnie was actually blushing and replying, not too audibly, that it would be awfully jolly.



'I'm sorry we've been so long.' Jaqueline had come up behind Wilfred, who turned politely to her. 'We've been hunting for Sylvia's waterproof hood. It isn't in your pocket by any chance, Frank, is it?'

Frank began examining his pockets, then those of the macintosh.

'We might call at the Picture House on our way and see if they've found it.'

'Course you can,' put in Wilfred. 'I'll have the car round in a jiff!'

'Oh, Wilfred, don't bother; it's no distance.'

'Nonsense, it's still raining like Hell!'

(At this Horace cocked an eye of friendly admiration and murmured some fortunately inaudible comment to the effect 'It sure is.')

'It may be in the car, of course,' reflected Jaqueline aloud. Sylvia was sulking rather while Lina buttoned her waterproof.

'If it turns up here we'll send it,' put in Isabel graciously.

'That will be kind, Isabel, and a great deal more than this bad girl deserves for losing it. You could give it to Lina and Ronnie if they came over to play tennis, couldn't you? Very good of you to ask them, I'm sure, I hope they'll keep up the family reputation.'

('She'd miss nothing, of course,' Frank thought to himself, buttoning his own neck.)

'There's Wilfred with the car. Well, good-bye, Frank, good-bye, Jaqueline. So nice. You'll come when you like, Ronnie.'

They drifted along the lounge to the door.

'Is Uncle Wilfred going to drive me home?' Sylvia was anxious to know.

'To the 'bus stop, dear.'

Wedging himself and his into the car, Frank listened.

'Uncle' Wilfred fitted quite well. 'Aunt' Isabel not a bit. Nor was Isabel probably anxious to be so designated. Either by instinct or accident, the children didn't think of it.

'Good-bye, Isabel,' he cried, and Jaqueline echoed 'Good-bye!'

'Good-bye,' chorused the children, as the car moved away from the steps, leaving that handsome, attractive figure under the portico, from which Isabel's stare after them was purely enigmatic. Did she mean anything?

*(To be continued.)*

## TENERIFFE AHOY !

BY RICHARD FITZGERALD FINDLAY.

TOWARDS four o'clock one afternoon in December I took off from Cape Juby, the most northerly of the two Spanish outposts in the Rio de Oro, to fly to Teneriffe. My ignorance on the subject of established aerodromes in the Canary Islands could hardly have been greater. From the Air Ministry, before leaving London, I had learned only that the landing-ground in the Gran Canaria was at Gando, probably on the beach, and that Los Rodeos, the 'Air Port of Teneriffe'—a title which connoted for me all the amenities of Croydon and Le Bourget—was believed to be situated some two miles west of La Laguna, at an altitude of 2,000 feet above sea-level. My enquiries at Cape Juby had added nothing to my knowledge, and it was with considerable misgivings that my mechanic and I left the security of the African coast behind us, painfully aware of the uneven running of the engine of our small three-seater cabin machine—which was due chiefly to the inferior quality of the Spanish monopoly-petrol—and fully conscious of the fact that, save for a rare fishing-boat, shipping on the sea between the mainland and the Islands was limited to the steamer which, once a fortnight, brought provisions to Cape Juby, so that a forced descent would almost certainly mean our total disappearance from human ken.

One hour and a quarter later, having overcome bad visibility, low cloud, and a degree of drift which we were unable to estimate, we sighted the Gran Canaria. Little more than forty minutes' daylight now remained, which, at our present rate of travel, would scarcely suffice to enable us to reach Teneriffe before nightfall, and the clouds were still so low that the aerodrome there would assuredly be hidden. Obviously it would be the height of folly to proceed, and I decided to land. I asked my mechanic, Hills, for the map of the Gran Canaria, and compared it with the coast-line before us, which was then some four miles off. We were close to the southern end of the island; that cape directly ahead, I thought, must be the one which was shown on the map as guarding Gando bay. As we approached it I looked in vain for the

beach. There was no beach, only a mass of tumbled rocks at the water's edge. The light was fading fast, for a heavy rainstorm was sweeping over the mountains from the north, and covering us with its fringe. No signs of an aerodrome were to be seen, no customary white circle marked upon the ground, no wind-sleeve, no sheltering hangar. But we had to come down, for soon the night would be upon us. A field appeared below, surrounded by stone walls, the only level space in all that deserted region in which there was room to land. Its surface, too, was strewn with stones and boulders, but I must try to avoid them. I closed the throttle, and glided over the leeward wall. We reached the ground, struck a small boulder with one wheel, canted at an alarming angle, regained an even keel, and, the whole machine creaking and groaning an outraged protest, jarred and jolted a few yards farther, and came to rest. I looked at Hills. 'I rather think,' I said, 'that we shall return to England by boat.' He nodded ruefully. We got out, and examined the under-carriage with the aid of an electric torch. Providence had been unusually lenient, for, to our delighted astonishment, nothing was damaged.

As we straightened our backs the air was filled with loud and strident cries, and, turning, we beheld crowds of peasants bearing down upon us from every point of the compass. A moment later we were hemmed in on every side, our hands over our ears to protect them from the din. As soon as I had recovered from its first terrific onslaught I addressed myself to the nearer peasants, hoping to find one amongst them who spoke either English or French. At first blank looks were all my reward, and then a man stepped forward and gave me to understand that he knew a little English. His estimate of his own proficiency was distressingly correct. With great difficulty I discovered that we were at Arinaga, some seven kilometres south of the landing-ground at Gando. Evidently my map-reading had been seriously at fault when coming in from the sea. Next I tried to convey my desire to reach Las Palmas as soon as possible. 'Taximetro, Las Palmas,' I said, displaying, I am afraid, a regrettable lack of fluency. But he understood. He shouted an order to the peasants, and several of them set off at a run across the field. Hills was busy securing the machine with ropes and pickets, for the wind was high, and putting the waterproof cover over the engine, lest the rain, which had ceased, should recommence. Only five minutes had elapsed since the departure of the messengers when, by means of what

seemed to be a species of legerdemain, the headlights of a large car appeared in a corner of the field, accompanied by shouts which I interpreted as an invitation to take my seat. I was loath to leave Hills behind, but there was no alternative, for it was essential that the machine should be guarded from the ubiquitous collector of souvenirs. Telling him, therefore, that I would come back for him later in the evening, I climbed into the car.

The 'interpreter' seated himself upon one side of me, and a portly peasant on the other. A second peasant took his place beside the driver, and two more, doubtless with the best intentions, stationed themselves upon each running-board. With this complement of nine the car moved off along the road, and soon began a slow winding ascent into the mountains. My escort kept up an incessant chatter, which was hardly interrupted when, as happened frequently, one of the outside passengers got off the crawling vehicle and disappeared down a narrow mountain-path, for the vacant place was at once filled by another, who materialised in some uncanny way out of the darkness. We had progressed thus for a quarter of an hour when a deafening report, which I had long been expecting, gave notice of a burst tyre. The car jerked to a halt. 'Caramba!' exclaimed the driver, in a tone expressive both of annoyance, which was justifiable, and of surprise, which was not. An indescribable commotion followed. Realising that my presence could only add to the confusion I sauntered a little way up the hill to smoke a cigarette. The night sky was almost clear now, though a few ragged clouds still drove before the wind across the stars. Presently, just as I was becoming impatient, I heard the sound of the engine re-starting. 'O.K., Mister,' shouted the 'interpreter,' this being, as I had already learned, his favourite remark. I retraced my steps to the car, and we set off once more.

Thirty minutes later we began to descend the far side of the mountain ridge. I was congratulating myself that the end of this strange journey could not be long deferred, when we rounded a curve and pulled up in a patch of light which shone through the windows of an inn beside the road. To my dismay the entire party dismounted and moved in a body towards the door. 'Hi!' I said. They turned, in evident surprise to find me still seated in the car. 'Las Palmas,' I said, pointing in an urgent manner down the road ahead. Broad smiles spread across their faces; they gestured with their thumbs towards the inn, made motions which were unmistakably those of drinking. I shook my head

vigorously. 'Las Palmas,' I repeated firmly. With the utmost good humour they, too, shook their heads, still more vigorously. The affair was rapidly developing all the characteristics of a Barmecide feast, for now they not only drank but also ate in realistic pantomime. And with such anticipatory relish did they play their rôles that I realised then and there the futility of further controversy. This stalemate, I saw, if allowed to persist, could have but one result, the dislocation of my neck, all unaccustomed as it was to this mode of argument. I went with them into the inn.

It was twenty minutes before I managed to persuade the driver to leave his wine and return to the car. The 'interpreter' came too, but much to my relief the remainder of the escort, at least two members of which were showing signs of regarding themselves as old retainers, bade me a hearty farewell.

We completed our journey in record time. Fortified by the rest, the chauffeur drove with remarkable abandon, assuming with confidence, and fortunately with reason, that all the corners were clear. At exactly half-past eight we stopped outside the British Consulate in Las Palmas, having covered the twenty-odd miles from Arinaga in a trifle under two hours.

By the time that I had interviewed the consul, telephoned to Santa Cruz, registered at the 'Atlantic Hotel,' paid off my driver, attempted unsuccessfully to requite the 'interpreter' for the trouble he had taken, and exchanged affectionate 'Adios' with them both, it was nearly half-past nine. I went to my room to wash, and, on my return to the lounge, found the Vice-Consul awaiting me. He was a Spaniard, with an ingratiating personality and an excellent command of English. I had intended to set out immediately to the rescue of Hills, but the Vice-Consul adjured me to have food first, on the grounds that it was more than an hour's journey to Arinaga, even by the shorter and usual road along the coast, and that I looked exceedingly hungry. He added, with disarming candour, that he himself had not yet dined. I was indeed hungry. Except for a plate of eggs and bacon at Cape Juby I had eaten nothing since six o'clock that morning, when I had had a *café complet* before our early start from Mogador. I decided to dine, and salved my conscience with the reflection that I could take some chocolate with me to sustain Hills until we should get back to the hotel. Besides, I remembered, I had to find someone to take his place in charge of the machine.

During the meal I enquired the exact whereabouts of the

landing-ground at Gando. It was unmarked, it appeared, but was easily recognisable from its proximity to a long-disused *lazaretto*, which stood on a high bluff overlooking the sea. It boasted a wind-sleeve, but no hangar, and was looked after by a watchman whose business it was to keep the surface free from casual obstructions.

We were joined for coffee by a member of the firm of Elders & Fyffes, who agreed at once to provide me with a guard for the machine, in the shape of a certain native labourer whom I should find at the Company's warehouses—which were situated within two or three miles of the field where we had landed—and for whom he gave me a letter of instructions.

Towards half-past ten I started off by car for Arinaga. A light rain was falling, and, to my own acute discomfort, we skidded wildly several times on the tram-lines in the town. But nothing could ruffle my driver's unconcern; his smile grew wider as my expostulations grew more heated, and, as we narrowly missed a gigantic lorry and came into open country, he raised his voice in song. To various airs from *Carmen* we covered perhaps ten miles, and then, for the second time that night, I heard the sound of a bursting tyre. The car lurched to a standstill. 'I fix him quick,' said the driver affably. He busied himself with a roll of tools, smilingly declining my offer of assistance. I walked wearily a few yards along the road, and sat down on a kilometre-stone outside the gates of a sleeping farm-house. It was raining hard now, and the wind howled dismally in the branches of the trees. 'Motoring in these parts,' I thought bitterly, 'seems to consist exclusively of a volley of exploding tyres. And from all accounts people come here for pleasure!' The singing had recommenced, and was punctuated by occasional grunts as the driver strained at the wheel. There was a sudden loud crash. The singing ceased, and an ominous silence fell. Filled with the gloomiest forebodings, I went to investigate the cause. It was as I feared; the car, minus one wheel, had slipped off the supporting jack and was listed heavily to starboard. 'O, Death, where is thy sting?' I said. The driver, who was squatting on his heels and staring as though stricken at the overturned jack, looked up at me in some bewilderment, engendered no doubt by the fact that his knowledge of English was inadequate to the task of grasping the allusion. The light from the rear-lamp shone full upon his face, and the contrast between his present woebegone expression and his erstwhile cheerfulness was so pathetic that I could not forbear to give him



a heartening smile. He smiled back gratefully. Suddenly the humour of the situation forced itself upon me, and I laughed uncontrollably until I could scarcely stand. And then we made superhuman efforts, and within twenty minutes the work was done.

A little before midnight we drew up in the middle of a desolate expanse of country close by—I hoped and believed—the field where I had left the machine. The rain was over, stars powdered the wind-swept sky, but in the absence of a moon the night was very dark. We decided to search outwards in a circle round the car, using its headlights as a beacon guide. What followed remains, in spite of its lighter moments, as a waking nightmare in my memory. For an hour and a half we tramped over the uneven surface, stumbling over rocks, falling into ditches, climbing over loose stone walls which never failed to discharge a number of their heavier components upon our luckless feet. Owing to the conformation of the ground we soon lost sight of the car, and shortly afterwards were by no means certain of the direction in which it lay. The wind blew at a steady thirty miles an hour, and not only hampered still further our already torturous movements, but rendered all conversation a matter of full-tongued shouts. At frequent intervals—apart altogether from the innumerable occasions when I was compelled to do so by cunningly placed roots—I prostrated myself upon the ground in a fruitless endeavour to see the outline of the machine against the sky. My length, to the last fraction of an inch, was perfectly known to me, so often did I measure it during that fearful search. At last, utterly exhausted, streaming with sweat, I could endure no more. I cursed the Canary Islands, the missing moon, the Science of Flight, and, above all, the wind, with an imaginative fervour which amazed myself, and which, I honestly believe, no trooper could have surpassed. A small stone cottage came into view, its whitewashed walls gleaming faintly through the darkness. I seized the driver by the shoulder. 'Listen,' I screamed, 'I must have a drink of water.' He knocked at the door of the cottage. In a few minutes it was opened, and the night-gowned figures of a man and a woman peered out. The driver explained my need, when the woman vanished, reappearing almost immediately with a glass of ice-cold water. 'Ask them,' I yelled, 'if they know where the aeroplane is.' The driver did so, leaning in through the cottage door to save his voice. The result was most startling. The peasant and his wife pushed past him, stepped on to the ground outside the door,

and, heedless of the muffling effect of their nightgowns, which blew vertically above their heads, shrieked in unison for several moments, pointing at the same time towards the south. When they had finished the driver told me that the machine was four kilometres from where we stood, so that our activities up to that time had been completely wasted. This depressing revelation left me quite unmoved, so wholly in keeping was it with all that had gone before. After all, I thought, it was no more than one must expect on what was, quite obviously, the Spanish Walpurgis night.

Fate, which had for so long made sport of us, now temporarily relented. The line which we chose led us, after a quarter of an hour's stiff walking, to the top of a rise from which we could see the headlights of the car, and five minutes later we were driving southwards along the road. We had travelled about two miles, when I saw, cutting the horizon on our left, a hill whose contours seemed familiar. Half a mile farther on we stopped, and looked back. Yes, I recognised the landmark now; it was the hill which lay a few hundred yards to the north of our landing-place, and the machine could not be far away. But thirty minutes more of agony went by before, lying prone for the twentieth time upon my stomach, I saw the monoplane wing silhouetted against the stars. I uttered a joyous 'who-whoop,' which, under normal conditions, would have been a fitting end to the hunt, but the gale snatched it from my lips and carried it like a sea-gull's cry far out across the sea.

When I opened the cabin door poor Hills started from an uneasy sleep. It was several moments before he could speak, so overjoyed was he at being rescued from his lonely vigil. As we drove towards the banana-packing yards of Elders & Fyffes he told me, between mouthfuls of chocolate, that his imagination had played tricks with him, so that he had fancied many times that stealthy figures were approaching the machine.

It was not until—by much loud knocking on various doors, and repeated soundings of the electric horn—we had roused the entire community that we succeeded in locating the labourer whose name the Company's representative had given me. The driver handed him the note, and, pursued by shouts of well-earned execration, we left the scene.

At ten minutes past four Hills and I tottered into the lounge of the 'Atlantic Hotel' in Las Palmas, and were greeted by the excellent manager, who had a large cold supper awaiting us. He



would have none of my apologies for keeping him from his bed so late, and insisted on remaining with us until Hills, despite his extreme fatigue, had eaten a substantial meal. The good man's sense of hospitality was not finally satisfied until he had conducted us to our rooms and assured himself that we had every comfort. Of all my recollections of the Canary Islands, his charming courtesy is by far the most delightful.

It was noon when I awoke. Conditions seemed favourable for the flight to Teneriffe, for, though the wind still blew with unabated force, the sun was shining fitfully, and the clouds were higher than they had been on the previous day. After luncheon, with the same driver as before, now a tried and valued friend, we set out for Arinaga. When we came within sight of the machine we realised that the watchman's duties must have proved most onerous, for it was surrounded by a crowd of peasants at least fifty strong, whose voices, as we reached the boundary wall of the field in which it stood, were borne to our ears like the cawing of rooks in English elms. As we scaled the wall, and saw for the first time in daylight the nature of the ground which lay beyond, my spirits sank. There was scarcely a square foot which was not covered with stones of every shape and size, and these, together with large outcrops of rock from the earth itself, made the field a veritable death-trap for all aircraft save balloons. How we had escaped irreparable damage when landing the night before is a mystery which must for ever remain obscure, and the prospects of taking-off without leaving the wheels behind seemed utterly hopeless. I conveyed my fears to Hills, and suggested that we should hire a lorry to tow the machine to Gando. He showed great sympathy, but pointed out that, owing to the span of the fixed wing, the adoption of my otherwise admirable plan would entail the removal of all the telegraph poles along four miles of road.

We were close to the gaily-dressed throng now, and had become the centre of interest. Standing somewhat apart, stern and impassive of countenance, were two fully-armed members of the Civil Guard. Suddenly a small man emerged from the thickest part of the press and ran to meet us, shouting shrilly and waving a frantic arm towards the machine. I guessed that this was the watchman, assumed from his agitated manner that the surging crowd had broken some vital part, and hurried forward to learn the worst. Relief and amazement in equal measure filled me at what I saw. Of visible damage there was none, but, seated at ease in the cabin, the

door of which I had forgotten to lock, was a red-faced individual who regarded me through the window with a contented smile. Before I had had time to take any action the custodian's plaintive voice broke out at my elbow, and I called upon the driver to translate his story. It appeared that just after midday, when no more than a handful of spectators had assembled on the scene, the stranger had arrived, informed the watchman that aviation was the passion of his life, and, before the latter had suspected his intentions, entered the cabin, from which all subsequent cajolery, argument, and threats had failed to dislodge him. The watchman, a man of negligible physique, insisted almost tearfully that only his fear lest a struggle should result in the total demolition of the aeroplane had restrained him from the use of force. I complimented him upon his discretion, assured him that I could not doubt his courage, and opened the cabin door.

My first impulse was to shut it again, so overpowering were the fumes of wine which, in a warm cloud, rushed out to assail my senses. I left it open, nevertheless, but stepped back a pace to allow my brain to clear. Hastily I reviewed the situation. Our visitor was indubitably drunk, and, in spite of his benevolent demeanour, I was prepared for a stubborn resistance. But I was not prepared for the nasal tones in which, without warning, he bridged the awkward silence. 'So you've come at last, bozo,' he said pleasantly, if a trifle thickly. 'Well, when do we start?' I was greatly taken aback, not more by the good American, marred by the merest trace of a Spanish accent, in which his remarks were spoken, than by their implication. 'Come on, old timer,' went on the occupant of the cabin, 'let's go. Lindbergh, that's me. Yes, *Sir!*' By this time I had collected my scattered wits, and was anxious to remove misunderstanding. As politely as was possible I told him that, contrary to his belief, I had not come to the Gran Canaria for the express purpose of giving him a flight, that the nature of the terrain made any attempt at taking-off, with my own weight alone, a hazardous adventure, and that, in consequence, and to my lasting regret, I should be unable to appease his appetite for aerial travel. In conclusion, I asked him to oblige me by dismounting.

During my discourse a subtle change had overspread the features of the Spaniard. His smile still held, but no longer possessed the gay camaraderie which had been its principal charm. Instead it had a fixed and wintry quality which I found most menacing, and I sighed inwardly. Sooner or later, it seemed certain, we should

be compelled to resort to violence. But, in the meanwhile, peaceful persuasion must be given another trial. I framed one last appeal in my mind, had opened my mouth to put it into words, when the members of the Civil Guard forestalled me. With a fine scorn of indirect methods one of them addressed what was obviously a peremptory order to the man inside the cabin. The reply was, as obviously, an emphatic refusal. The gendarme thereupon raised his rifle, and, to my horror, struck his drunken fellow-countryman a sharp blow in the solar plexus with the butt. A look of anguish, not unnaturally, replaced the frozen smile, and the unfortunate creature doubled up, writhing with pain. The two gendarmes plucked him out of the cabin and dumped him roughly on the ground a few yards away, where he lay groaning and gasping for breath. I have no knowledge of Spanish, and could not, therefore, express my indignation at what I felt was unnecessarily drastic treatment, but I commanded the driver to do so for me. And then I bade him refrain, for, after all, I thought, it was none of my business, the victim, more winded than hurt, was already almost recovered, and what I had witnessed was, in all probability, an everyday occurrence, one of those old Spanish customs of which I had heard so much. Besides, there was no denying the fact that it had effectually solved a delicate problem.

We now began to consider the question of taking-off. The first essential was to clear a path for the machine, and Hills, the driver, and I applied ourselves grimly to this Herculean labour. We moved abreast in a straight line up-wind from the machine, bent double from the waist, and so intent upon the removal of all the stones from a track some five yards wide that a quarter of an hour elapsed before, standing erect to rest my aching back, I became aware that the peasants had come to our assistance. This display of kindness would have been most gratifying, but for the fact that they had failed signally to grasp our purpose. Presumably thinking that the work in progress was a novel game devised by the English, a race notoriously devoted to all forms of outdoor sport, they had entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the affair, as fifty stooping figures plainly testified. The air behind us, too, was thick with boulders, the direction of their flight depending solely upon the field of vision of each individual thrower, but, whether from a freak of chance or no, the majority were falling back with dread monotony upon the very path from which we had so lately taken them. Only slightly mollified by the intermittent

yelps of pain which showed that some few of the missiles were dropping elsewhere, I dearly longed to hurl the rocks which I held in either hand at the nearer peasants. With a great effort I stifled this ungrateful impulse, and asked the driver to enlighten them. Their faces showed, by turns, surprise, concern, and disappointment, and then, with smiles and nods of dawning comprehension, they set to with a will and speedily undid the mischief they had done.

In less than an hour the track, a hundred yards in length, was ready. Whilst the engine was warming up, Hills took all superfluous equipment out of the cabin, to shorten to the minimum the take-off run. I seated myself at the controls, and opened the throttle wide. And now I blessed the wind which that same morning I had cursed so bitterly, for, despite the uphill slope, I jolted for no more than thirty yards over the rocky surface before I was in the air. Rain was falling from an overcast sky as, climbing steadily, I flew towards Gando. At fifteen hundred feet I entered the clouds. Momentarily, here and there, small rifts appeared, but one thousand feet higher they showed no signs of breaking, and I knew that they must shroud the aerodrome in Teneriffe. Should we *ever* see it, I wondered? As I emerged again into the light of day I saw the bay of Gando below me. There, too, was the *lazaretto*, and there, three-quarters of a mile from the water's edge, was a flat expanse of green-brown turf with a wind-sleeve in the corner.

The car arrived soon after I had landed, and was closely followed by the watchman, who lived near by. With his help we picketed the aeroplane, for there was no sort of shelter. He had, I fancy, been long mortified in secret that the office of which he was so manifestly proud should be so largely of but academic interest, and could not conceal his joy at having at last some object other than a goat on which to exercise his powers of watchfulness. He aimed an accurate kick at the too-inquisitive goat, begging us at the same time to return to Las Palmas with no slightest fear that our trust in him would be betrayed.

All the next morning rain fell in sheets, and scudding clouds brushed the roof-tops of the buildings in the town. Early in the afternoon the rain became a drizzle, and a perceptible brightening in the north gave promise of more improvement. So tired were we of the Gran Canaria and all that it contained that we clutched at this hope of quitting it for ever, and drove at once to Gando.

Within a few minutes of leaving the ground we realised the forlornness of the attempt, for the clouds were lower than they had been since our arrival. We made two circuits of Las Palmas, as a signal that we were about to leave the island, and headed west along the northern coast.

Fifty minutes later we made land-fall at Santa Cruz, and followed the winding road to La Laguna. The rain had almost ceased now, and it seemed that after all we should be lucky. I said as much to Hills, and regretted instantly that I had thus tempted Fate. Half a mile beyond the ancient capital the road was lost in clouds, which wreathed the top of a wireless mast close by. Unless we could land within five minutes we should be forced to return to Gando, for in an hour our petrol would be exhausted. We circled the city, looking always westward to where the aerodrome must lie beneath that clammy pall. Three minutes passed; surely the clouds were rolling off the road? Yes, a mile or more was visible now on the farther side of La Laguna. We flew along it, and, as we reached the receding barrier of cloud, and turned steeply on its leaden flank, its lower edges seemed to melt away. A brief vista was disclosed, like that from a dress-circle with the curtain raised a few feet above the stage, and at its end the smoke of a bonfire was streaming southwards from a patch of green. We dived towards it under the lifted blanket. Mist swirled about our windows, but through its thin transparency we could see the field forty feet below. A crowd of people on the windward side—motor-cars upon the road beyond—a solitary figure by the bonfire waving eager arms—Los Rodeos at last!

As we got out of the machine the Consul extended a welcoming hand. I looked about me. Except for the bonfire, which had been lighted for our guidance when the sound of our engine had first been heard, the field possessed no distinguishing feature. The Airport of Teneriffe! I thought of the picture which this title had conjured in my mind, of the hangars, and hotels, and Customs offices, of all the noisy, romantic bustle of the great aerodromes of Europe—and laughed aloud. I explained my laughter to the Consul, and he laughed with me. But he told me that the landing-ground had the only flat surface in the island, so that it could be claimed for it, at least, that it needed no other marking.

We slept that night in the 'Hotel Pino de Oro' in Santa Cruz. In the morning the sun shone brightly from a sky dotted with snow-white cumuli, and I hoped that to-day we should see the

Pico de Teyde, which, with its supports and spurs, covers two-thirds of Teneriffe. But when, after luncheon, we drove to Los Rodeos, the mighty El Piton, twelve thousand feet in height, still wore his robe of clouds.

While Hills filled the tanks with oil and petrol I talked to a reporter, who asked me, on behalf of *Las Noticias* of La Laguna, if I could suggest improvements to the aerodrome. I have a copy of that journal, sent to me afterwards by the British Consul, from which it appears that my simple proposals were made the subject of a Corporation meeting. For the sake of others who may fly there I hope that they were adopted.

Our journey back to the mainland was a miserable experience. So strange were the noises emanating from the engine that, when we reached Las Palmas, we climbed high above the clouds, where the wind was stronger and our drift increased. As we came within gliding distance of the African coast the needle of the oil-pressure gauge commenced to flicker, steadied again for a moment, and then moved quickly to the zero mark. So, I thought, after successfully crossing the sea, we should be forced down in this hostile country, many miles south of our objective, with a practical certainty of being captured by Moors long before we could walk to safety! Truly the gods were cruel! But, even as I wondered how soon the engine would seize from lack of oil, that vital needle crept slowly back to its original position, wavered a little, and became motionless once more. 'A piece of dirt in the pipe-line,' said Hills laconically, but I knew that his heart, like mine, had missed a beat.

We swung northwards into a gale of wind which tossed us like a cork. Eddying sand at times obscured the ground. Forty minutes later, in the gathering dusk, we landed at Cape Juby.



## COUCHING AT THE DOOR.

BY D. K. BROSTER.

## I.

THE first inkling which Augustine Marchant had of the matter was on one fine summer morning about three weeks after his visit to Prague, that is to say, in June, 1898. He was reclining, as his custom was when writing his poetry, on the very comfortable sofa in his library at Abbot's Medding, near the french windows, one of which was open to the garden. Pausing for inspiration—he was nearly at the end of his poem, *Salutation to All Unbeliefs*—he let his eyes wander round the beautifully appointed room, with its cloisonné and Satsuma, Buhl and first editions, and then allowed them to stray towards the sunlight outside. And so, between the edge of the costly Herat carpet and the sill of the open window, across the strip of polished oak flooring, he observed what he took to be a small piece of dark fluff blowing in the draught; and instantly made a note to speak to his housekeeper about the parlourmaid. There was slackness somewhere; and in Augustine Marchant's house no one was allowed to be slack but himself.

There had been a time when the poet would not for a moment have been received, as he was now, in country and even county society—those days, even before the advent of *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, when he had lived in London, writing the plays and poems which had so startled and shocked all but the 'decadent' and the 'advanced,' *Pomegranates of Sin*, *Queen Theodora* and *Queen Marozia*, *The Nights of the Tour de Nesle*, *Amor Cypriacus* and the rest. But when, as the 'nineties began to wane, he inherited Abbot's Medding from a distant cousin and came to live there, being then at the height of an almost international reputation, Wiltshire society at first tolerated him for his kinship with the late Lord Medding, and then, placated by the excellence of his dinners and further mollified by the patent staidness of his private life, decided that, in his personal conduct at any rate, he must have turned over a new leaf. Perhaps indeed he had never been as bad as he was painted, and if his writings continued to be no less scandalously free and freethinking than before, and needed to be just as rigidly kept

out of the hands of daughters, well, no country gentleman in the neighbourhood was obliged to read them !

And indeed Augustine Marchant in his fifty-first year was too keenly alive to the value of the good opinion of county society to risk shocking it by any overt doings of his. He kept his licence for his pen. When he went abroad, as he did at least twice a year—but that was another matter altogether. The nose of Mrs. Grundy was not sharp enough to smell out his occupations in Warsaw or Berlin or Naples, her eyes long-sighted enough to discern what kind of society he frequented even so near home as Paris. At Abbot's Medding his reputation for being 'wicked' was fast declining into just enough of a sensation to titillate a croquet party. He had charming manners, could be witty at moments (though he could not keep it up), still retained his hyacinthine locks (by means of hair restorers), wore his excellently cut velvet coats and flowing ties with just the right air—half poet, half man of the world—and really had, at Abbot's Medding, no dark secret to hide beyond the fact, sedulously concealed by him for five-and-twenty years, that he had never been christened Augustine. Between Augustus and Augustine, what a gulf ! But he had crossed it, and his French poems (which had to be smuggled into his native land) were signed Augustin—Augustin Lemarchant.

Removing his gaze from the objectionable evidence of domestic carelessness upon the floor Mr. Marchant now fixed it meditatively upon the ruby-set end of the gold pencil which he was using. Rossell & Ward, his publishers, were about to bring out an édition de luxe of *Queen Theodora and Queen Marozia* with illustrations by a hitherto unknown young artist—if they were not too daring. It would be a sumptuous affair in a limited edition. And as he thought of this the remembrance of his recent stay in Prague returned to the poet. He smiled to himself, as a man smiles when he looks at a rare wine, and thought, 'Yes, if these blunt-witted Pharisees round Abbot's Medding only knew !' It was a good thing that the upholders of British petty morality were seldom great travellers ; a dispensation of . . . ahem, Providence !

Twiddling his gold pencil between plump fingers, Augustine Marchant returned to his ode, weighing one epithet against another. Except in summer he was no advocate of open windows, and even in summer he considered that to get the most out of that delicate and precious instrument, his brain, his feet must always be kept thoroughly warm ; he had therefore cast over them, before settling

into his semi-reclining position, a beautiful rose-coloured Indian *sari* of the purest and thickest silk, leaving the ends trailing on the floor. And he became aware, with surprise and annoyance, that the piece of brown fluff or whatever it was down there, travelling in the draught from the window, had reached the nearest end of the *sari* and was now, impelled by the same current, travelling up it.

The master of Abbot's Medding reached out for the silver hand-bell on the table by his side. There must be more breeze coming in than he had realised, and he might take cold, a catastrophe against which he guarded himself as against the plague. Then he saw that the upward progress of the dark blot—it was about the size of a farthing—could not by any possibility be assigned to any other agency than its own. It was *climbing* up—some horrible insect, plainly, some disgusting kind of almost legless and very hairy spider, round and vague in outline. The poet sat up and shook the *sari* violently. When he looked again the invader was gone. He had obviously shaken it on to the floor, and on the floor somewhere it must still be. The idea perturbed him, and he decided to take his writing out to the summer-house, and give orders later that the library was to be thoroughly swept out.

Ah ! it was good to be out of doors and in a pleasance so delightfully laid out, so exquisitely kept, as his ! In the basin of the fountain the sea-nymphs of rosy-veined marble clustered round a Thetis as beautiful as Aphrodite herself ; the lightest and featheriest of acacia-trees swayed near. And as the owner of all this went past over the weedless turf he repeated snatches of Verlaine to himself about ' *sveltes jets d'eau* ' and ' *sanglots d'exstase* .'

Then, turning his head to look back at the fountain, he became aware of a little dark-brown object about the size of a halfpenny running towards him over the velvet-smooth sward. . . .

He believed afterwards that he must first have had a glimpse of the truth at that instant in the garden, or he would not have acted so instinctively as he did and so promptly. For a moment later he was standing at the edge of the basin of Thetis, his face blanched in the sunshine, his hand firmly clenched. Inside that closed hand something feather-soft pulsed. . . . Holding back as best he could the disgust and the something more which clutched at him, Augustine Marchant stooped and plunged his whole fist into the bubbling water, and let the stream of the fountain whirl away what he had picked up. Then with uncertain steps he went and sat down on the nearest seat and shut his eyes. After a while he took

out his lawn handkerchief and carefully dried his hand with the intaglio ring, dried it and then looked curiously at the palm. 'I did not know I had so much courage,' he was thinking; 'so much courage and good sense!' . . . It would doubtless drown very quickly.

Burrows, his butler, was coming over the lawn. 'Mr. and Mrs. Morrison have arrived, sir.'

'Ah yes; I had forgotten for the moment.' Augustine Marchant got up and walked towards the house and his guests, throwing back his shoulders and practising his famous enigmatic smile, for Mrs. Morrison was a woman worth impressing.

(But what had it been exactly? Why, just what it had looked—a tuft of fur blowing over the grass, a tuft of fur! Sheer imagination that it had moved in his closed hand with a life of its own. . . . Then why had he shut his eyes as he stooped and made a grab at it? Thank God, thank God, it was nothing now but a drenched smear swirling round the nymphs of Thetis!)

'Ah, dear lady, you must forgive me! Unpardonable of me not to be in to receive you!' He was in the drawing-room now, fragrant with its banks of hothouse flowers, bending over the hand of the fashionably attired guest on the sofa, in her tight bodice and voluminous sleeves, with a flyaway hat perched at a rakish angle on her gold-brown hair.

'Your man told us that you were writing in the garden,' said her goggle-eyed husband reverentially.

'*Cher maître*, it is we who ought not to be interrupting your rendezvous with the Muse,' returned Mrs. Morrison in her sweet, high voice. 'Terrible to bring you from such company into that of mere visitors!'

Running his hand through his carefully tended locks the *cher maître* replied, 'Between a visit from the Muse and one from Beauty's self no true poet would hesitate!—Moreover, luncheon awaits us, and I trust it is a good one.'

He liked faintly to shock fair admirers by admitting that he cared for the pleasures of the table; it was quite safe to do so, since none of them had sufficient acumen to see that it was true.

The luncheon was excellent, for Augustine kept an admirable cook. Afterwards he showed his guests over the library—yes, even though it had not received the sweeping which would not be necessary now—and round the garden; and in the summer-house was prevailed upon to read some of *Amor Cypriacus* aloud. And

Mrs. Frances (nowadays Francesca) Morrison was thereafter able to recount to envious friends how the Poet himself had read her stanza after stanza from that most *daring* poem of his; and how poor Fred, fanning himself meanwhile with his straw hat—not from the torridity of the verse but because of the afternoon heat—said afterwards that he had not understood a single word. A good thing, perhaps . . .

When they had gone Augustine Marchant reflected rather cynically, 'All that was just so much bunkum when I wrote it.' For ten years ago, in spite of those audacious, glowing verses, he was an ignorant neophyte. Of course, since then . . . He smiled, a private, sly, self-satisfied smile. It was certainly pleasant to know oneself no longer a fraud!

Returning to the summer-house to fetch his poems he saw what he took to be Mrs. Morrison's fur boa lying on the floor just by the basket chair which she had occupied. Odd of her not to have missed it on departure—a tribute to his verses perhaps. His house-keeper must send it after her by post. But just at that moment his head gardener approached, desiring some instructions, and when the matter was settled, and Augustine Marchant turned once more to enter the summer-house, he found that he had been mistaken about the dropped boa, for there was nothing on the floor.

Besides, he remembered now that Mrs. Morrison's boa had been a rope of grey feathers, not of dark fur. As he took up *Amor Cypriacus* he asked himself lazily what could have led him to imagine a woman's boa there at all, much less a fur one.

Suddenly he knew why. A lattice in the house of memory had opened, and he remained rigid, staring out at the jets of the fountain rising and falling in the afternoon sun. Yes; of that glamorous, wonderful, abominable night in Prague the part he least wished to recall was connected—incidentally but undeniably—with a fur boa . . . a long boa of dark fur . . .

He had to go up to town next day to a dinner in his honour. There and then he decided to go up that same night, by a late train, a most unusual proceeding, and most disturbing to his valet, who knew that it was doubtful whether he could at such short notice procure him a first-class carriage to himself. However, Augustine Marchant went, and even, to the man's amazement, deliberately chose a compartment with another occupant when he might, after all, have had an empty one.

The dinner was brilliant; Augustine had never spoken better.

Next day he went round to the little street not far from the British Museum where he found Lawrence Storey, his new illustrator, working feverishly at his drawings for *Queen Theodora and Queen Marozia*, and quite overwhelmed at the honour of a personal visit. Augustine was very kind to him, and, while offering a few criticisms, highly praised his delineation of those two Messalinas of tenth-century Rome, their long supple hands, their heavy eyes, their full, almost repellent mouths. Storey had followed the same type for mother and daughter, but with a subtle difference.

'They were certainly two most evil women, especially the younger,' he observed ingenuously. 'But I suppose that, from an artistic point of view, that doesn't matter nowadays!'

Augustine, smoking one of his special cigarettes, made a delicate little gesture. 'My dear fellow, Art has nothing whatever to do with what is called "morality"; happily we know that at last! Show me how you thought of depicting the scene where Marozia orders the execution of her mother's papal paramour. Good, very good! Yes, the lines there, even the fall of that loose sleeve from the extended arm, express with clarity what I had in mind. You have great gifts!'

'I have tried to make her look wicked,' said the young man, reddening with pleasure. 'But,' he added deprecatingly, 'it is very hard for a ridiculously inexperienced person like myself to have the right artistic vision. For to you, Mr. Marchant, who have penetrated into such wonderful arcana of the forbidden, it would be foolish to pretend to be other than I am.'

'How do you know that I have penetrated into any such arcana?' enquired the poet, half-shutting his eyes and looking (though not to the almost worshipping gaze of young Storey) like a great cat being stroked.

'Why, one has only to read you!'

'You must come down and stay with me soon,' were Augustine Marchant's parting words. (He would give the boy a few days' good living, for which he would be none the worse; let him drink some decent wine.) 'How soon do you think you will be able to finish the rough sketches for the rest, and the designs for the *culs de lampe*? A fortnight or three weeks? Good; I shall look to see you then. Good-bye, my dear fellow; I am very, very much pleased with what you have shown me!'

The worst of going up to London from the country was that one was apt to catch a cold in town. When he got back Augustine



Marchant was almost sure that this misfortune had befallen him, so he ordered a fire in his bedroom, despite the season, and consumed a *recherché* little supper in seclusion. And, as the cold turned out to have been imaginary, he was very comfortable, sitting there in his silken dressing-gown, toasting his toes and holding up a glass of golden Tokay to the flames. Really *Theodora and Marozia* would make as much sensation when it came out with these illustrations as when it first appeared!

All at once he set down his glass. Not far away on his left stood a big cheval mirror, like a woman's, in which a good portion of the bed behind him was reflected. And, in this mirror, he had just seen the valance of the bed move. There could be no draught to speak of in this warm room, he never allowed a cat in the house, and it was quite impossible that there should be a rat about. If after all some stray cat should have got in it must be ejected at once. Augustine hitched round in his chair to look at the actual bed-hanging.

Yes, the topaz-hued silk valance again swung very slightly outwards as though it were being pushed. Augustine bent forward to the bell-pull to summon his valet. Then the flask of Tokay rolled over on the table as he leapt from his chair instead. Something like a huge, dark caterpillar was emerging very slowly from under his bed, moving as a caterpillar moves, with undulations running over it. Where its head should have been was merely a tapering end smaller than the rest of it, but of like substance. It was a dark fur boa.

Augustine Marchant felt that he screamed, but he could not have done so, for his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He merely stood staring, staring, all the blood gone from his heart. Still very slowly the thing continued to creep out from under the valance, waving that eyeless, tapering end to and fro, as though uncertain where to proceed. 'I am going mad, mad, mad!' thought Augustine, and then, with a revulsion, 'No, it can't be! It's a real snake of some kind!'

That could be dealt with. He snatched up the poker as the boa-thing, still swaying the head which was no head, kept pouring steadily out from under the lifted yellow frill, until quite three feet were clear of the bed. Then he fell upon it furiously, with blow after blow.

But they had no effect on the furry, spineless thing; it merely gave under them and rippled up in another place. Augustine hit the bed, the floor; at last, really screaming, he threw down his

weapon and fell upon the thick, hairy rope with both hands, crushing it together into a mass—there was little if any resistance in it—hurled it into the fire and, panting, kept it down with shovel and tongs. The flames licked up instantly and, with a roar, made short work of it, though there seemed to be some slight effort to escape, which was perhaps only the effect of the heat. A moment later there was a very strong smell of burnt hair, and that was all.

Augustine Marchant seized the fallen flask of Tokay and drained from its mouth what little was left in the bottom ere, staggering to the bed, he flung himself upon it and buried his face in the pillows, even heaping them over his head as if he could thus stifle the memory of what he had seen.

He kept his bed next morning; the supposed cold afforded a good pretext. Long before the maid came in to re-lay the fire he had crawled out to make sure that there were no traces left of . . . what he had burnt there. There were none. A nightmare could not have left a trace, he told himself. But well he knew that it was not a nightmare.

And now he could think of nothing but that room in Prague and the long fur boa of the woman. Some department of his mind (he supposed) must have projected that thing, scarcely noticed at the time, scarcely remembered, into the present and the here. It was terrible to think that one's mind possessed such dark, unknown powers. But not so terrible as if the . . . apparition . . . had been endowed with an entirely separate objective existence. In a day or two he would consult his doctor and ask him to give him a tonic.

But, expostulated an uncomfortably lucid part of his brain, you are trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Is it not better to believe that the thing *had* an objective existence, for you have burnt it to nothing? Well and good! But if it is merely a projection from your own mind, what is to prevent it from re-appearing, like the phoenix, from ashes?

There seemed no answer to that, save in an attempt to persuade himself that he had been feverish last night. Work was the best antidote. So Augustine Marchant rose, and was surprised and delighted to find the atmosphere of his study unusually soothing and inspiring, and that day, against all expectation, *Salutation to All Unbeliefs* was completed by some stanzas with which he was not too ill-pleased. Realising nevertheless that he should be glad of company that evening, he had earlier sent round a note to the

local solicitor, a good fellow, to come and dine with him; played a game of billiards with the lawyer afterwards and retired to bed, after some vintage port and a good stiff whisky and soda with scarcely a thought of the visitant of the previous night.

He woke at that hour when the thrushes in early summer punctually greet the new day—three o'clock. They were greeting it even vociferously, and Augustine Marchant was annoyed with their enthusiasm. His golden damask window-curtains kept out all but a glimmer of the new day, yet as, lying upon his back, the poet opened his eyes for a moment, his only half-awakened sense of vision reported something swinging to and fro in the dimness like a pendulum of rope. It was indistinct but seemed to be hanging from the tester of the bed. And, wide awake in an instant, with an unspeakable anguish of premonition tearing through him, he felt, next moment, a light thud on the coverlet about the level of his knees. Something had arrived on the bed . . .

And Augustine Marchant neither shrieked nor leapt from his bed; he could not. Yet, now that his eyes were grown used to the twilight of the room, he saw it clearly, the fur rope which he had burnt to extinction two nights ago, dark and shining as before, rippling with a gentle movement as it coiled itself neatly together in the place where it had struck the bed and subsided there in a symmetrical round, with only that tapering end a little raised and, as it were, looking at him—only, eyeless and featureless, it could not look. One thought of disgusted relief, that it was not at any rate going to attack him, and Augustine Marchant fainted.

Yet his swoon must have merged into sleep, for he woke in a more or less ordinary fashion to find his man placing his early tea-tray beside him and enquiring when he should draw his bath. There was nothing on the bed.

'I shall change my bedroom,' thought Augustine to himself, looking at the haggard, fallen-eyed man who faced him in the mirror as he shaved. 'No, better still, I will go away for a change. Then I shall not have these . . . dreams. I'll go to old Edgar Fortescue for a few days; he begged me again not long ago to come any time.'

So to the house of that old Mæcenas he went. He was much too great a man now to be in need of Sir Edgar's patronage. It was homage which he received there, both from host and guests. The stay did much to soothe his scarified nerves. Unfortunately the last day undid the good of all the foregoing ones.

Sir Edgar possessed a pretty young wife—his third—and, among

other charms of his place in Somerset, an apple orchard underplanted with flowers. And in the cool of the evening Augustine walked there with his host and hostess almost as if he were the Almighty with the dwellers in Eden. Presently they sat down upon a rustic seat (but a very comfortable one) under the shade of the apple boughs, amid the incongruous but pleasant parterres.

'You have come at the wrong season for these apple-trees, Marchant,' observed Sir Edgar after a while, taking out his cigar. 'Blossom-time or apple-time—they are showy at either, in spite of the underplanting.—What is attracting you on that tree—a tit? We have all kinds here, pretty, destructive little beggars!

'I did not know that I was looking . . . it's nothing . . . thinking of something else,' stammered the poet. Surely, surely he had been mistaken in thinking that he had seen a sinuous, dark, furry thing undulating like a caterpillar down the stem of that particular apple-tree at a few yards' distance?

Talk went on, even his; there was safety in it. It was only the breeze which faintly rustled that bed of heliotrope behind the seat. Augustine wanted desperately to get up and leave the orchard, but neither Sir Edgar nor his wife seemed disposed to move, and so the poet remained at his end of the seat, his left hand playing nervously with a long bent of grass which had escaped the scythe.

All at once he felt a tickling sensation on the back of his hand, looked down and saw that featureless snout of fur protruding upwards from underneath the rustic bench and sweeping itself backwards and forwards against his hand with a movement which was almost caressing. He was on his feet in a flash.

'Do you mind if I go in?' he asked abruptly. 'I'm not . . . feeling very well.'

If the thing could follow him it was of no use to go away. He returned to Abbot's Medding looking so much the worse for his change of air that Burrows expressed a respectful hope that he was not indisposed. And almost the first thing that occurred, when Augustine sat down at his writing-table to attend to his correspondence, was the unwinding of itself from one of its curved legs of a soft, brown, oscillating serpent which slowly waved an end at him as if in welcome . . .

In welcome, yes, that was it! The creature, incredible though it was, the creature seemed glad to see him! Standing at the other end of the room, his hands pressed over his eyes—for what was the use

of attempting to hurt or destroy it?—Augustine Marchant thought shudderingly that, like a witch's cat, a 'familiar' would not, presumably, be ill disposed towards its master. Its master! Oh God!

The hysteria which he had been trying to keep down began to mount uncontrollably when, removing his hands, Augustine glanced again towards his writing-table and saw that the boa had coiled itself in his chair and was sweeping its end to and fro over the back, somewhat in the way that a cat, purring meanwhile, rubs itself against furniture or a human leg in real or simulated affection.

'Oh go, go away from there!' he suddenly screamed at it, advancing with outstretched hand. 'In the devil's name, get out!'

To his utter amazement, he was obeyed. The rhythmic movements ceased, the fur snake poured itself down out of the chair and writhed towards the door. Venturing back to his writing-table after a moment Augustine saw it coiled on the threshold, the blind end turned towards him as usual, as though watching. And he began to laugh. What would happen if he rang and someone came; would the opening door scrape it aside . . . would it vanish? Had it, in short, an existence for anyone else but himself?

But he dared not make the experiment. He left the room by the french window, feeling that he could never enter the house again. And perhaps, had it not been for the horrible knowledge just acquired that it could follow him, he might easily have gone away for good from Abbot's Medding and all his treasures and comforts. But of what use would that be—and how should he account for so extraordinary an action? No; he must think and plan while he yet remained sane.

To what, then, could he have recourse? The black magic in which he had dabbled with such disastrous consequences might possibly help him. Left to himself he was but an amateur, but he had a number of books. . . . There was also that other realm whose boundaries sometimes marched side by side with magic—religion. But how could he pray to a Deity in whom he did not believe? Rather pray to the Evil which had sent this curse upon him to show him how to banish it. Yet since he had deliberately followed what religion stigmatised as sin, what even the world would label as lust and necromancy, supplication to the dark powers was not likely to deliver him from them. They must somehow be outwitted, circumvented.

He kept his *grimoires* and books of the kind in a locked bookcase in another room, not in his study; in that room he sat up till mid-

night. But the spells which he read were useless ; moreover, he did not really believe in them. The irony of the situation was that, in a sense, he had only played at sorcery ; it had but lent a spice to sensuality. He wandered wretchedly about the room dreading at any moment to see his 'familiar' wreathed round some object in it. At last he stopped at a small bookcase which held some old forgotten books of his mother's—Longfellow and Mrs. Hemans, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, and a good many volumes of sermons and mild essays. And when he looked at that blameless assembly a cloud seemed to pass over Augustine Marchant's vision, and he saw his mother, gentle and lace-capped, as years and years ago she used to sit, hearing his lessons, in an antimacassared chair. She had been everything to him then, the little boy whose soul was not smirched. He called silently to her now : 'Mamma, Mamma, can't you help me ? Can't you send this thing away ?'

When the cloud had passed he found that he had stretched out his hand and removed a big book. Looking at it he saw that it was her Bible, with 'Sarah Amelia Marchant' on the faded yellow flyleaf. Her spirit *was* going to help him ! He turned over a page or two, and out of the largish print there sprang instantly at him : *Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field.* Augustine shuddered and almost put the Bible back, but the conviction that there was help there urged him to go on. He turned a few more pages of Genesis and his eyes were caught by this verse, which he had never seen before in his life.

'And if thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.'

What strange words ! What could they possibly mean ? Was there light for him in them ? 'Unto thee shall be his desire.' That Thing, the loathsome semblance of affection which hung about it. . . . 'Thou shalt rule over him.' It *had* obeyed him, up to a point. . . . Was this Book, of all others, showing him the way to be free ? But the meaning of the verse was so obscure ! He had not, naturally, such a thing as a commentary in the house. Yet, when he came to think of it, he remembered that some pious and anonymous person, soon after the publication of *Pomegranates of Sin*, had sent him a Bible in the Revised Version, with an inscription recommending him to read it. He had it somewhere, though he had always meant to get rid of it.



After twenty minutes' search through the sleeping house he found it in one of the spare bedrooms. But it gave him little enlightenment, for there was scant difference in the rendering, save that for, 'lieth at the door,' this version had, 'coucheth,' and that the margin held an alternative translation for the end of the verse : 'And unto thee is its desire, but thou shouldest rule over it.'

Nevertheless, Augustine Marchant stood after midnight in this silent, sheeted guest-chamber repeating, '*But thou shouldest rule over it.*'

And all at once he thought of a way of escape.

## II.

It was going to be a marvellous experience, staying with Augustine Marchant. Sometimes Lawrence Storey hoped there would be no other guests at Abbot's Medding; at other times he hoped there would be. A *tête-à-tête* of four days with the great poet—could he sustain his share worthily? For Lawrence, despite the remarkable artistic gifts which were finding their first real flowering in these illustrations to Augustine's poem, was still unspoilt, still capable of wonder and admiration, still humble and almost naïf. It was still astonishing to him that he, an architect's assistant, should have been snatched away, as Ganymede by the eagle, from the lower world of elevations and drains to serve on Olympus. It was not, indeed, Augustine Marchant who had first discovered him, but it was Augustine Marchant who was going to make him famous.

The telegraph poles flitted past the second-class carriage window and more than one traveller glanced with a certain envy and admiration at the fair, good-looking young man who diffused such an impression of happiness and candour, and had such a charming smile on his boyish lips. He carried with him a portfolio which, he never let out of reach of his hand; the oldish couple opposite, speculating upon its contents, might have changed their opinion of him had they seen them.

But no shadow of the dark weariness of things unlawful rested on Lawrence Storey; to know Augustine Marchant, to be illustrating his great poem, to have learnt from him that art and morality had no kinship, this was to plunge into a new realm of freedom and enlarging experience. Augustine Marchant's poetry, he felt, had already taught his hand what his brain and heart knew nothing of.

There was a dogcart to meet him at the station, and in the

scented June evening he was driven with a beating heart past meadows and hayfields to his destination.

Mr. Marchant, awaiting him in the hall, was at his most charming. 'My dear fellow, are those the drawings? Come, let us lock them away at once in my safe! If you had brought me diamonds I should not be one quarter so concerned about thieves. And did you have a comfortable journey? I have had you put in the orange room; it is next to mine. There is no one else staying here, but there are a few people coming to dinner to meet you.'

There was only just time to dress for dinner, so that Lawrence did not get an opportunity to study his host until he saw him seated at the head of the table. Then he was immediately struck by the fact that he looked curiously ill. His face—ordinarily by no means attenuated—seemed to have fallen in, there were dark circles under his eyes, and the perturbed Lawrence, observing him as the meal progressed, thought that his manner too seemed strange and once or twice quite absent-minded. And there was one moment when, though the lady on his right was addressing him, he sharply turned his head away and looked down at the side of his chair just as if he saw something on the floor. Then he apologised, saying that he had a horror of cats, and that sometimes the tiresome animal from the stables . . . But after that he continued to entertain his guests in his own inimitable way, and, even to the shy Lawrence, the evening proved very pleasant.

The three ensuing days were wonderful and exciting to the young artist—days of uninterrupted contact with a master mind which acknowledged, as the poet himself admitted, none of the petty barriers which man, for his own convenience, had set up between alleged right and wrong. Lawrence had learnt why his host did not look well; it was loss of sleep, the price exacted by inspiration. He had a new poetic drama shaping in his mind which would scale heights that he had not yet attempted.

There was almost a touch of fever in the young man's dreams to-night—his last night but one. He had several. First he was standing by the edge of a sort of mere, inexpressibly desolate and unfriendly, a place he had never seen in his life, which yet seemed in some way familiar; and something said to him, 'You will never go away from here!' He was alarmed, and woke, but went to sleep again almost immediately, and this time was back, oddly enough, in the church where in his earliest years he had been taken to service by the aunt who had brought him up—a large church

full of pitch-pine pews with narrow ledges for hymnbooks, which ledges he used surreptitiously to lick during the long dull periods of occultation upon his knees. But most of all he remembered the window with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, on either side of an apple-tree round whose trunk was coiled a monstrous snake with a semi-human head. Lawrence had hated and dreaded that window, and because of it he would never go near an orchard and had no temptation to steal apples. . . . Now he was back in that church again, staring at the window, lit up with some infernal glow from behind. He woke again, little short of terrified—he, a grown man! But again he went to sleep quite quickly.

His third dream had for background, as sometimes happens in nightmares, the very room in which he lay. He dreamt that a door opened in the wall, and in the doorway, quite plain against the light from another room behind him, stood Augustine Marchant in his dressing-gown. He was looking down at something on the ground which Lawrence did not see, but his hand was pointing at Lawrence in the bed, and he was saying in a voice of command, 'Go to him, do you hear? Go to him! Go to *him*! Am I not your master?' And Lawrence, who could neither move nor utter a syllable, wondered uneasily what this could be which was thus commanded, but his attention was chiefly focussed on Augustine Marchant's face. After he had said these words several times, and apparently without result, a dreadful change came upon it, a look of the most unutterable despair. It seemed visibly to age and wither; he said, in a loud, penetrating whisper, 'Is there no escape then?' covered his ravaged face a moment with his hands, and then went back and softly closed the door. At that Lawrence woke; but in the morning he had forgotten all three dreams.

The *tête-à-tête* dinner on the last night of his stay would have lingered in a gourmet's memory, so that it was a pity the young man did not know in the least what he was eating. At last there was happening what he had scarcely dared hope for; the great poet of the sensuous was revealing to him some of the unimaginably strange and secret sources of his inspiration. In the shaded rosy candlelight, his elbows on the table among trails of flowers he, who was not even a neophyte, listened like a man learning for the first time of some spell or spring which will make him more than mortal.

'Yes,' said Augustine Marchant, after a long pause, 'yes, it was a marvellous, an undying experience . . . one that is not given to

many. It opened doors, it—but I despair of doing it justice in mere words.' His look was transfigured, almost dreamy.

'But she . . . the woman . . . how did you . . . ?' asked Lawrence Storey in a hushed voice.

'Oh, the woman?' said Augustine, suddenly finishing off his wine. 'The woman was only a common streetwalker.'

A moment or two later Lawrence was looking at his host wonderingly and wistfully. 'But this was in Prague. Prague is a long way off.'

'One does not need to go so far, in reality. Even in Paris—'

'One could . . . have that experience in Paris?'

'If you knew where to go. And of course, it is necessary to have credentials. I mean that—like all such enlightenments—it has to be kept secret, most secret, from the vulgar minds who lay their restrictions on the finer. That is self-evident.'

'Of course,' said the young man, and sighed deeply. His host looked at him affectionately.

'You, my dear Lawrence—I may call you Lawrence?—want just that touch of . . . what shall I call them—*les choses cachées*—to liberate your immense artistic gifts from the shackles which still bind them. Through that gateway you would find the possibility of their full fruition! It would fertilise your genius to a still finer blossoming. . . . But you would have scruples . . . and you are very young.'

'You know,' said Lawrence in a low and trembling tone, 'what I feel about your poetry. You know how I ache to lay the best that is in me at your feet. If only I could make my drawings for the Two Queens more worthy—already it is an honour which overwhelms me that you should have selected me to do them—but they are not what they should be. I am *not* sufficiently liberated. . . .'

Augustine leant forward on the flower-decked table. His eyes were glowing.

'Do you truly desire to be?'

The young man nodded, too full of emotion to find his voice.

The poet got up, went over to a cabinet in a corner and unlocked it. Lawrence watched his fine figure in a sort of trance. Then he half-rose with an exclamation.

'What is it?' asked Augustine very sharply, facing round.

'Oh, nothing, sir—only that I believe you hate cats, and I thought I saw one, or rather its tail, disappearing into that corner.'

'There's no cat here,' said Augustine quickly. His face had

become all shiny and mottled, but Lawrence did not notice it. The poet stood a moment looking at the carpet; one might almost have thought that he was gathering resolution to cross it; then he came swiftly back to the table.

'Sit down again,' he commanded. 'Have you a pocket-book with you, a pocket-book which you never leave about? Good! Then write *this* in one place; and *this* on another page . . . write it small . . . among other entries is best . . . not on a blank page . . . write it in Greek characters if you know them. . . '

'What . . . what is it?' asked Lawrence, all at once intolerably excited, his eyes fixed on the piece of paper in Augustine's hand.

'The two halves of the address in Paris.'

### III.

Augustine Marchant kept a diary in those days, a locked diary written in cipher. And for more than a month after Lawrence Storey's visit the tenor of the entries there was almost identical:

'No change . . . Always with me . . . How much longer can I endure it? The alteration in my looks is being remarked upon to my face. I shall have to get rid of Thornton [his man] on some pretext or other, for I begin to think that he has seen It. No wonder, since it follows me about like a dog. When It is visible to everyone it will be the end. . . . I found It in bed with me this morning, pressed up against me as if for warmth. . . .'

But there was a different class of entry also, appearing at intervals with an ever-increasing note of impatience.

'Will L. S. go there? . . . When shall I hear from L. S.? . . . Will the experiment do what I think? It is my last hope.'

Then, suddenly, after five weeks had elapsed, an entry in a trembling hand:

'For twenty-four hours I have seen no sign of It! Can it be possible?'

And next day:

'Still nothing. I begin to live again.—This evening has just come an ecstatic letter from L. S., from Paris, telling me that he had "presented his credentials" and was to have the experience next day. He has had it by now—by yesterday, in fact. Have I really freed myself? It looks like it!'

In one week from the date of that last entry it was remarked

in Abbot's Medding how much better Mr. Marchant was looking again. Of late he had not seemed at all himself; his cheeks had fallen in, his clothes seemed to hang loosely upon him, who had generally filled them so well, and he appeared nervous. Now he was as before, cheery, courtly, debonair. And last Sunday, will you believe it, he went to church! The Rector was so astonished when he first became aware of him from the pulpit that he nearly forgot to give out his text. And the poet joined in the hymns, too! Several observed this amazing phenomenon.

It was the day after this unwonted appearance at St. Peter's. Augustine was strolling in his garden. The air had a new savour, the sun a new light; he could look again with pleasure at Thetis and her nymphs of the fountain, could work undisturbed in the summer-house. Free, free! All the world was good to the senses once again, and the hues and scents of early autumn better, in truth, than the brilliance of that summer month which had seen his curse descend upon him.

The butler brought him out a letter with a French stamp. From Lawrence Storey, of course; to tell him—what? Where had he caught his first glimpse of it? In one of those oppressively furnished French bedrooms? And how had he taken it?

At first, however, Augustine was not sure that the letter was from Storey. The writing was very different, cramped instead of flowing, and, in places, spluttering, the pen having dug into the paper as if the hand which held it had not been entirely under control—almost, thought Augustine, his eyes shining with excitement, almost as though something had been twined, liana-like, round the wrist. (He had a sudden sick recollection of a day when that had happened to him, quickly submerged in a gush of eager anticipation.) Sitting down upon the edge of the fountain he read—not quite what he had looked for.

'I don't know what is happening to me,' began the letter without other opening. 'Yesterday I was in a café by myself, and had just ordered some absinthe—though I do not like it. And quite suddenly, although I knew that I was in the café, I realised that I was also back in *that room*. I could see every feature of it, but I could see the café too, with all the people in it; the one was, as it were, superimposed upon the other, the room, which was a good deal smaller than the café, being inside the latter, as a box may be within a larger box. And all the while the room was growing clearer, the café fading. I saw the glass of absinthe suddenly



standing on nothing, as it were. All the furniture of *the room*, all the accessories you know of, were mixed up with the chairs and tables of the *café*. I do not know how I managed to find my way to the *comptoir*, pay and get out. I took a *fiacre* back to my hotel. By the time I arrived there I was all right. I suppose that it was only the after effects of a very strange and violent emotional experience. But I hope to God that it will not recur !

‘How interesting!’ said Augustine Marchant, dabbling his hand in the swirling water where he had once drowned a piece of dark fluff. ‘And why indeed should I have expected that It would couch at his door in the same form as at mine?’

Four days more of new-found peace and he was reading this :

‘In God’s name—or the Devil’s—come over and help me! I have hardly an hour now by night or day when I am sure of my whereabouts. I could not risk the journey back to England alone. It is like being imprisoned in some kind of infernal half-transparent box, always growing a little smaller. Wherever I go now I carry it about with me; when I am in the street I hardly know which is the pavement and which is the roadway, because I am always treading on that black carpet with the cabalistic designs; if I speak to anyone they may suddenly disappear from sight. To attempt to work is naturally useless. I would consult a doctor, but that would mean telling him everything. . . .’

‘I hope to God he won’t do that!’ muttered Augustine uneasily. ‘He can’t—he swore to absolute secrecy. I hadn’t bargained, however, for his ceasing work. Suppose he finds himself unable to complete the designs for “Theodora and Marozia”! That would be serious. . . . However, to have freed myself is worth *any* sacrifice. . . . But Storey cannot, obviously, go on living indefinitely on two planes at once. . . . Artistically, though, it might inspire him to something quite unprecedented. I’ll write to him and point that out; it might encourage him. But go near him in person—is it likely!’

The next day was one of great literary activity. Augustine was so deeply immersed in his new poetical drama that he neglected his correspondence and almost his meals—except his dinner, which seemed that evening to be shared most agreeably and excitingly by these new creations of his brain. Such, in fact was his preoccupation with them that it was not until he had finished the savoury and poured out a glass of his superlative port that he remembered a telegram which had been handed to him as he came in to dinner.

It still lay unopened by his plate. Now, tearing apart the envelope, he read with growing bewilderment these words above his publishers' names :

'Please inform us immediately what steps to take are prepared send to France recover drawings if possible what suggestions can you make as to successor Rossell and Ward.'

Augustine was more than bewildered ; he was stupefied. Had some accident befallen Lawrence Storey of which he knew nothing ? But he had opened all his letters this morning though he had not answered any. A prey to a sudden very nasty anxiety he got up and rang the bell.

'Burrows, bring me *The Times* from the library.'

The newspaper came, unopened. Augustine, now in a frenzy of uneasiness, scanned the pages rapidly. But it was some seconds before he came upon the headline : 'TRAGIC DEATH OF A YOUNG ENGLISH ARTIST,' and read the following, furnished by the Paris correspondent :

'Connoisseurs who were looking forward to the appearance of the superb illustrated edition of Mr. Augustine Marchant's *Queen Theodora and Queen Marozia* will learn with great regret of the death by drowning of the gifted young artist, Mr. Lawrence Storey, who was engaged upon the designs for it. Mr. Storey had recently been staying in Paris, but left one day last week for a remote spot in Brittany, it was supposed in pursuance of his work. On Friday last his body was discovered floating in a lonely pool near Carhaix. It is hard to see how Mr. Storey could have fallen in, since this piece of water—the Mare de Plougouven—has a completely level shore surrounded by reeds, and is not in itself very deep, nor is there any boat upon it. It is said that the unfortunate young Englishman had been somewhat strange in his manner recently and complained of hallucinations ; it is therefore possible that under their influence he deliberately waded out into the Mare de Plougouven. A strange feature of the case is that he had fastened round him under his coat the finished drawings for Mr. Marchant's book, which were of course completely spoilt by the water before the body was found. It is to be hoped that they were not the only—'

Augustine threw *The Times* furiously from him and struck the dinner-table with his clenched fist.

'Upon my soul, that is too much ! It is criminal ! My property—and I who had done so much for him ! Fastened them round himself—he must have been crazy !'

But had he been so crazy? When his wrath had subsided a little Augustine could not but ask himself whether the young artist had not in some awful moment of insight guessed the truth, or a part of it—that his patron had deliberately corrupted him? It looked almost like it. But, if he had really taken all the finished drawings with him to this place in Brittany, what an unspeakably mean trick of revenge thus to destroy them! . . . Yet, even if it were so, he must regard their loss as the price of his own deliverance, since, from his point of view, the desperate expedient of passing on his 'familiar' had been a complete success. By getting someone else to plunge even deeper than he had done into the unlawful (for he had seen to it that Lawrence Storey should do that) he had proved, as that verse in Genesis said, that he *had* rule over . . . what had pursued him in tangible form as a consequence of his own night in Prague. He could not be too thankful. The literary world might well be thankful too. For his own art was of infinitely more importance than the subservient, the parasitic art of an illustrator. He could with a little search find half a dozen just as gifted as that poor hallucination-ridden Storey to finish 'Theodora and Marozia'—even, if necessary, to begin an entirely fresh set of drawings. And meanwhile, in the new lease of creative energy which this unfortunate but necessary sacrifice had made possible for him, he would begin to put on paper the masterpiece which was now taking brilliant shape in his liberated mind. A final glass, and then an evening in the workshop!

Augustine poured out some port, and was raising the glass, prepared to drink to his own success, when he thought he heard a sound near the door. He looked over his shoulder. Next instant the stem of the wineglass had snapped in his hand and he had sprung back to the farthest limit of the room.

Reared up for quite five feet against the door, huge, dark, sleeked with wet and flecked with bits of green waterweed, was something half-python, half-gigantic cobra, its head drawn back as if to strike . . . its head, for in its former featureless tapering end were now two reddish eyes, such as furriers put into the heads of stuffed creatures. And they were fixed in an unwavering and malevolent glare upon him, as he cowered there clutching the bowl of the broken wineglass, the crumpled copy of *The Times* lying at his feet.

## CHRISTMAS AT BETHLEHEM: MODERN STYLE.

BY DOUGLAS V. DUFF.

THE ragged, grey mist wound its snakelike tendrils over the steep cone of the Frank's Mountain, as though it were agonising over the shattered tomb of Herod on the summit, seeming still further to intensify the raw, biting cold of the Judean winter uplands, as Harding and his detachment of armed Palestine Police swung, in 'column of fours,' up the narrow main street of Bethlehem in the dawning of Christmas Eve. The great Basilica of the Nativity loomed dark and dreary amongst the windowless walls of the fortress-monastery that surrounded it, whilst never a lamp gleamed in the grey ghost-light from the shutters of the neighbouring Casa Nova, the pilgrim hospice. Within the Basilica the slowly intensifying light only served to indicate the position of the mighty pillars that lined the double aisles, but, in the Grotto of the Stable beneath the High Altar of the Greeks, the Friars were already commencing the long series of Masses that were to mark the festival of Christmas. The silver star on the floor, marking the legendary Birthplace, gleamed palely in the flickering light of the wax candles, a gleam that was thrown back again in the sinister shimmer of the Arab policeman's fixed bayonet, as the sentry 'stood at ease' over the emblem, posted there to prevent any recurrence of the incidents that, in the early years of the latter half of the nineteenth century, set four great European nations at each other's throats, and sent thousands of men to leave their bones in the wastes of the Crimean Peninsula or the hospital graveyards of Scutari.

Even in this nineteen-hundred-and-twenty-seventh year of Grace relations were none too good between the Eastern and Western Churches, and Britain's suzerainty over the Holy Land sometimes failed to enforce that nebulous code of procedure in the Holy Places, referred to, for lack of a better name, as the 'status quo ante,' by which each Church was to retain the same rights and privileges that they had enjoyed before the Last Crusade freed the land of Outremer once again from the Paynim, and the broad cross of St. George had been planted by Allenby and his men, for the fourth time in history, in the soil of Palestine. Harding set

up temporary headquarters in the old Turkish *serai*, close to the main door of the Basilica, and distributed his men about the buildings and the Grotto where they would be handiest in the event of trouble occurring. However, all went quietly; without any untoward incident, His Beatitude the Patriarch had made his State entry into the town and thence to the Basilica, without any zealot of an opposing Church causing trouble, and the many services had been performed without any friction having been caused, and, well contented, Harding sat back in his chair, toasting his feet with a flaming 'Valor' stove. The dinner provided for him at the Casa Nova, had, albeit it was a day of fast, been well-cooked and tasty, the Friars' wine had been excellent, and he was quite prepared to enjoy the couple of hours of rest before the commencement of the evening ceremonies, when half his force of Moslem policemen would be sitting demurely in the pews of St. Catherine's Church, thereby reserving the seats for the District Commissioner and other notables, and the remainder employed in lining the entrances and exits from the building.

Suddenly the door of the room banged open, and an agitated Greek Archimandrite literally bounced in, every hair in his magnificent chestnut beard bearing witness to his agitation. Harding rose to his feet, and giving this most Hellenistic of all Greeks the Arabic name which his native congregation had affectionately bestowed on him, said, 'Welcome, ya Abuna Isa. Won't you sit down and join me in something to keep out the chill?'

'No, no, sir,' replied the Archimandrite, stuttering with the surging of his indignation, 'the Archbishop of Bethlehem begs that you will come quickly to the Holy Stable and see what the Friars are doing, and then prevent them from infringing the "status quo ante." Come quickly or there will be serious trouble there, for even now our men are mustering in the Stable, determined to defend our rights.'

With an inward groan Harding struggled into his greatcoat, and, taking a stout ashplant, followed the angry clergyman down the stairs. He ordered all the available men in reserve to accompany him and then strode, in the Archimandrite's wake, to the low door of the Basilica. Descending the stairs into the Grotto, he found several Greek monks and Prelates drawn up in line at the foot of the opposite stairs, whilst, facing them from the lower end of the Stable-cave, towards the rock-hewn passage that connects the Shrine with the Chapel of the Holy Innocents, were a number of

Friars, staring, with unveiled hostility, at the Eastern clerics. In the middle of the Stable was a Friar, carrying a four-foot wooden standard on which was fixed an electric bulb, whilst a length of flexible wire trailed away towards the entrance to the Cavern of the Innocents. He was faced by an angrily gesticulating Greek bishop, who was shouting at the Friar, evidently bidding him begone.

Harding, wise to these squabbles in the Holy Places, first called for silence and then invited each party to state their case. It appeared that the Friars, wishing to have better light at the dark Manger altar, during the approaching midnight ceremonies, had brought the electric lamp through their own chapel next door, and proposed setting it up on the top of the two steps leading down to the Manger. The Greeks resented this as an innovation and stated that they feared, should they allow it to be erected, the Friars would quote the incident as a precedent for always doing so, and that then it would only be a step further for the Friars to claim the right of executing all the lighting arrangements in the Grotto. This would lead, in a generation or two, when the facts of the original precedent were forgotten, to a claim of sole ownership of the Stable, based on the contention that, as they provided the lighting, and had done so from such-and-such a year, the Stable must always have been really theirs. This question of precedents, so the Greek Archbishop pointed out, was so serious that every seemingly trivial encroachment must be resisted for the sake of generations of churchmen as yet unborn, and that he, for one, was quite prepared, should necessity arise, to fight to the death in the defence of his Church's rights. Harding saw that any delay in dealing with the matter, would, in the inflamed state of tempers on both sides, be fatal, whilst for him to make a decision, which he would need to enforce by *force majeure*, might not only have the gravest effect on his personal career, but also cause great embarrassment to the Government, when the aggrieved side appealed to the foreign consuls for redress. He felt quite at a loss for a moment, but then, like a ray of strong sunlight through the morning fogs of the Jerusalem hills, inspiration came.

'My lord Archbishop,' he said, turning to the Greek Superior, 'this light that the Friars wish to put at their altar is, as you will agree, not affixed to the wall or the floor, it is temporary and readily removable, would it not be sensible to consider it as a candle? It is easily carried by one man, it will only be here for the duration of the services to-night, and is really necessary for the



purposes of their liturgy, if they are not to suffer eye-strain. Will you agree that it is to be considered as a candle, for candles, as you are well aware, are allowed by the "status quo," when they are in the form of portable lights, and not affixed to the altar in excess of the number allowed.'

To Harding's amazement the Archbishop agreed to his argument, instantly and without demur, and gravely ordered his clergy to leave the Grotto, whilst the officer bade the Friars to proceed with their project of placing the electric portable lamp, warning them that it would have to be removed immediately after the conclusion of the midnight services.

The next scene in the comedy-drama was played twelve days later, the day of Eastern Christmas Eve and Western Epiphany, when the hours of services for the different Churches in the Grotto are very strictly regulated. Once again, however, the day had passed without untoward incident, and again, Harding was taking things easy in preparation for the night's work, but, on this occasion, it was a very angry Friar, a great friend of his, an Englishman by birth but American by nationality, who bounced through the door with every hair in his short, Sir-Francis-Drake-beard, bristling with indignation.

'Hullo, Father,' said Harding, 'come and sit down. There's some jolly good beef-tea in the Thermos and those sandwiches——'

'I don't want your wretched beef-tea or your miserable sandwiches, Harding,' roared the angry Friar. 'Get that coat of yours on and come down to the Grotto and see what those unspeakable Greeks have done to desecrate the Shrine.'

Once again Harding and his men entered the Stable, to find very much the same scene as previously, except that, instead of a small electric portable lamp, four lusty servants of the Greek monastery carried, on a frame, the very biggest paraffin arc-lamp that he had ever seen. Spluttering and hissing, roaring in the draught, the lamp filled the little Shrine with an inferno of noise, whilst the grinning faces of the triumphant Greeks, the furious countenances of the Friars, and the amused features of the Arab police, alike glistened and streamed with the perspiration caused by the intense heat of the sizzling lamp. Mopping his brow, Harding asked the Archbishop the reason for the presence of the huge lamp.

'You will note, sir,' blandly commenced the Prelate, 'that this lamp, with which we hope to improve the lighting at our midnight service, is not affixed to the wall or the floor, it is temporary and

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easily removable, would it not be sensible to consider it as a candle ? It is easily carried by one man, it will only be here for the duration of the service to-night, and is really necessary for us, if we are not to suffer from eye-strain. Will you not agree that it is really a candle ?'

Nonplussed for the moment, and struggling with suppressed mirth, Harding looked at the Friar, and was relieved to see that even on his angry features, the ghost of an irrepressible grin was beginning to show, and said, ' Well, Father, you know the old adage, " What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." Better call your men off and I will arrange this matter with the Archbishop. Afterwards I'll report to the District Commissioner and get a ruling on the whole vexed question.'

The Friar withdrew his men, and, as soon as they had left the Stable, the Archbishop, having demonstrated his rights and made his point, yielded to Harding's suggestion, and gave instructions for the removal of the arc-lamp, a course that he was glad to take without loss of prestige, as it would have been quite impossible to celebrate the many ceremonies of Orthodox Christmas Eve whilst it was burning in the narrow space.

Despite Hardy's report on the matter, the whole affair was shelved and no ruling was given on the matter. Christmas Eve of '28 arrived with the matter still in abeyance. Harding was on leave in Cairo, and another officer, new to this type of work, was on duty at Bethlehem. Once again the lamp question caused trouble, and, unskilfully handled by the new officer, culminated in a gory fracas between the clerics of the two Churches, in which several of the zealous defenders of both points of view were more or less seriously injured, and had to be treated in Hospital.

The Grotto of the Stable had several blood-splashes on its walls and floors before order was restored, and the presence of these stains, incongruous in such a place at such a season, caused the District Commissioner, fearful of 'yellow-press' news-reporters getting hold of the story, and 'splashing' it in the world's headlines, to order it to be immediately cleansed. But here arose an unforeseen difficulty, for the Grotto, although assiduously swept and cleaned by each Church in turn, had never been washed out since, some eighty years before, another dispute over this very question of cleaning had caused the Turkish authorities to issue an order forbidding either side to wash the place until further instruc-

tions were issued after arbitration had been resorted to. The case had been shelved and allowed to drag along, with the result that, when the Red Cross once again flew over the Citadel of Jerusalem and the Turks had fled the land, no decision had been made.

Both the Friars and the Greeks were anxious to wash the sacred floor, but each was determined that the other should not be allowed to do so. An attempt to introduce Greek monks with floorcloths was frustrated by the entry of Friars, with sleeves rolled back and buckets in their grips. Both sides were then expelled from any further attempt at washing the Shrine. Meanwhile time was wearing on, large numbers of pilgrims and tourists were certain to want to visit the Stable, whilst the incriminating stains were there it was impossible to cover up the scandal of the morning's trouble, and such evidence might well inflame the different Christian bodies to a bloody riot against each other, in support of their clergy. The District Commissioner cut the Gordian knot by deciding that the Palestine Government would carry out the cleaning. Accordingly, three luxurious saloon cars drew up at the entrance to the Government Offices at Damascus Gate, a senior officer of police alighted, and went through the deserted offices, collecting the charwomen as he went. In His Excellency's private office he found old Um Shafic, the senior of the cleaning-staff, hard at work on her knees. The Christian matron, with the usual contempt of the elderly woman for a young man who attempts to exercise his authority, flatly refused to go, or to allow any of her women to do so.

'No, Cartwright Bey, I will not go with you,' she shrilled, her arms akimbo on her portly waistline. 'What would be said of me in the *Haret el Nassarah*, the Christian Quarter, if it should be said that Um Shafic rode alone with a man in a motor-car? I should be dishonoured and younger women will point their fingers at me as a woman without sense of shame. I am not one of your Frankish bezoms, with their raddled cheeks, short hair and shorter skirts, but a woman of the Arab and the mother of sons, and I tell you that I will not go. Fetch my son, Shafic, and then perhaps I will accompany you.'

'But, Um Shafic, the rest of the *Sittat*, the ladies who are your colleagues, and who, like you, do the Government the honour of cleaning out their offices, will be going with you. You will not be unaccompanied,' pleaded Cartwright, somewhat daunted by the old woman's demeanour.

'What! and ride with your policemen? I should indeed say

not, for are they not Moslems and the sons of dogs? How can I, a Christian woman,' and she paused to piously cross herself, left shoulder first, 'deign to ride with the followers of the accursed Prophet.'

'I'll give you a car to yourselves, there will be no one there except the other *Sittat*, your companions. No policeman will ride with you.'

'That will be well, but what of the driver? You will next deny his manhood. No, I will not ride in your cars, unless you fetch Shafic my son, nor will I let the others go unless they each have one of their male relatives to bear them escort,' concluded the redoubtable Mother of Shafic.

As she spoke a telephone-bell in the office shrilled, and Cartwright found a very angry and terribly worried District Commissioner on the other end, demanding to know the reason for the delay. Cartwright endeavoured to explain, but was cut short and told: 'Get some of those thick-headed policemen of yours detailed as a fatigue-party to come out here. For goodness' sake, hurry.'

Back to the Central Barracks rushed the harassed officer to find that, after the fatigue-party had been detailed, they refused flatly to go to Bethlehem, preferring to suffer any disciplinary pains and penalties rather than to so demean themselves. An elderly sergeant, with a respectful salute, explained:

'Lord, we are very sorry to disobey you, but how shall we, Moslems and soldiers as we are, ever again hold up our heads if the townsmen hear that we have been employed in scrubbing out a Christian Church? Every son-of-Shame in the land will laugh at us, and no longer fear us, and when we attempt to do our duty in the streets, the very women will ask us if we have not forgotten our skirts, and wave floorcloths at us. No, Lord, we are very sorry, but this duty we cannot do.'

Fortunately at this juncture a further telephone message from Bethlehem forbade him to use policemen, or other regular Government officials for the duty, as both parties to the dispute had objected to their employment in the Church, as they were afraid that it might also form a precedent for Governmental interference in Church matters. They had no objection, however, to the use of the office cleaners, and for Government to pay them, recovering the amounts later, from both parties. In fact both the Friars and the Greeks were most anxious to pay the full cost of the operations, as this would afford them a valuable argument in the never-ending

struggle for the proprietorship of the Holy Places, for their right to be always the washers of the Stable. Neither would a simple halving of the expenses be of much use as certain other Eastern Churches, such as the Syriac-Jacobites, the Armenians, and the Copts, had rights to be considered.

Cartwright, on arrival at the Barracks, had sent for the N.C.O. in charge of the Government Offices guard, and found out the names of all the charwomen from him, and had then issued urgent orders to the Inspector of the Christian Quarter Police Station to arrest at once one of the male relatives of each of them, especially Shafic, the son of the chieftainess of the charwomen, and to bring them, with as little delay as possible, to Damascus Gate. Hurrying there he chartered some more cars, and, bringing out the women, with their relatives, completely armed at all points with buckets, brooms, scrubbing brushes and all the paraphernalia of their Mystery, he loaded the whole crowd into the cars, and only pausing to collect a score of Primus stoves and some empty four-gallon petrol-tins, rushed them to the Basilica, the charwomen, very excited at the idea of washing out the Blessed Stable, whooping and singing the whole way to give vent to their feelings.

At Bethlehem, Cartwright found a very worried District Commissioner endeavouring to entertain a bored collection of tourists and pilgrims, in a large reception hall of the Casa Nova, feverishly telling jokes, and endeavouring to get the small orphans who formed the Patriarchal band, to play some lively tunes, which the snivelling infants, in an ecstasy of shyness at being spoken to by such a senior official as himself, painfully baulked in the first few bars of every tune they commenced. He had told the tourists, amongst whom Americans predominated, that a few minor repairs had to be done to the Stable before it would be safe for them to enter it and asked their patience for a little while longer whilst this was being done. Most of them had only one, at the most two, days in which to 'do' Palestine, and every minute of delay added to their desperate exasperation, but to allow them into the Stable whilst the incriminating stains were still there would be to start a world scandal, and, above all things, the worthy District Commissioner wished to avoid any reflection on his capability as an administrator.

With a sigh of relief he saw Cartwright lead his merry band across the rear courtyard of the Greek Monastery, introduced by the side entrance in the Street of the Milk Grotto, and, excusing

himself from his unwilling guests, ran down and urged the utmost despatch. The Basilica was kept clear whilst a score of Primuses roared and hissed under the water-cans, boiling the water for the frenzied old women who toiled heroically at their scrubbing, desisting every now and again, overawed by the sanctity of the place they were cleaning, to pray, only to be tactfully redirected to their task by Cartwright. Sixty-two four-gallon tins were used before the place was pronounced clean, but for once in its life the venerable Grotto shone as cleanly as a new pin. All the offending stains were removed, whilst the air reeked with the mingled odours of carbolic soap, wax candles, creosol, incense and tightly packed, hard-worked, perspiring humanity, as the long-pent flood of tourists were allowed at long last to enter the Shrine, noting, in their rush, nothing amiss.

The main outcome of the fracas was the sentencing of several monks on both sides to differing terms of detention in specified monasteries, and their being interdicted for different periods of years from entering the Basilica or the Stable, whilst the carrying of all portable lights by any party was definitely forbidden. The numbers of candles on the different altars, together with the hours in which each Church was allowed to have them alight, was also strictly fixed, to the intense dissatisfaction and annoyance of both parties to the original dispute, both of whom maintained their intention to ignore and override the decision, and were only united in their inflexible determination to co-operate with the Government in preventing their rivals from disobeying the new decree.

The Friar was a curious study in opposites. Small in stature, but with all a Yorkshireman's stockiness of build, the Shire of broad acres had been his birthplace, although he had gained American citizenship by naturalisation. Nearly thirty years of the burning heats and dark intrigues of Palestine had failed to age him; his short, grey beard had the same cut and the identical cock-sure truculence of that of Sir Francis Drake, whilst the determination of the gallant spirit within glinted in his merry blue eyes. Bereft of a more usual outlet for his ambitions and the fiery spirit that consumed him, he had become an intense admirer, and sincere emulator, at least in spirit, of the days of the Crusades. The Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and the Basilica of the Nativity at Bethlehem were even more than the sites of stirring events in the Life of his Master, for, to him, they were the yet-remaining concrete



objects for which two million men had suffered and died in the far-off days of the Wars for Holy Rood, and, often, as he knelt amongst his brethren in the weekly services in the Sepulchre, the glance of his eye revealed that what played before him was more the vision of the haggard, thin, maddened soldiers of Godfrey, Baldwin and Bohemond, bursting into the edifice, 'red from the wine-press of the Lord,' to quote the old chronicler, after they had stormed the walls of Jerusalem, than the more sombre events detailed in the breviary he held. These venerable fanes, to liberate which men of his blood and Faith had risked all, he now saw in the hands of strangers, to him schismatical or heretical, whilst his own Church, the Church of the men who had borne the Red Cross on their shoulders, was pushed into dark corners and obscure ambulatories by the arrogant representative of petty local bodies, with no significance, spiritually, outside the bounds of Palestine.

The whole purpose of his life, the all-consuming desire that gripped and held him, was, in some measure, to contribute towards the restitution of the Holy Places to the descendants of the men of the Crusades. If he could accomplish this project, if he could go down to posterity as the man who restored the Holy Places to exclusive Western guardianship, he would die a happy man, counting his life well spent in the endeavour. Had he lived in the brave old days of the Latin Kingdom of Outremer, it would have been the mail of the Templar, or the white-crossed, black mantle of the Hospital that would have covered his muscular form, rather than the drab habit he now wore.

No one more passionately resented the sentences passed on his brethren than did the Friar. He considered them both as unjust and as an unwarrantable encroachment of the Civil Power upon ecclesiastical preserves, and he formed the determination to demonstrate the right to have what lights were considered necessary at the forthcoming Christmas festivals at Bethlehem. He was very friendly with Harding, each man having a sincere regard and respect for the other's personality, although, from their differing official standpoints, they were as far apart as the poles. One day, sitting in his friend's quarters in the Central Barracks, the Friar spoke of his determination to disobey the District Commissioner's ruling regarding the lights at Bethlehem, on the following Christmas Eve. Harding knew well that no argument would serve to alter his mind; he would welcome physical injury, inflicted on him by officials attempting to restrain him; to him the pain

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he would suffer would partake of the holy suffering of the martyr, whilst at the same time a judicious parade of his hurts would serve as very useful propaganda to assist him in discharging his life's ambition. No consideration of friendship, not even any ties of blood would, Harding well knew, be allowed to deter him, any pangs he felt at not complying with friendship's obligations, would be swallowed up in that fierce feeling of abnegatory exultation in which your true martyr revels. But, at all costs, he must be stopped from executing his design, whilst also prevented from reaping advantage from any semblance of persecution.

But the difficulty was how to do it. For months the correct answer to the problem evaded Harding, and it was wellnigh Christmas again before he saw any solution of the puzzle. When the time came to make out the details for police arrangements at Bethlehem, he carefully chose an old rascal, Abdel Latif, a man from Hebron, and several of his relations, who, so Dame Rumour had it, were brigands before the British Occupation, and the smallest of whom was well over fifteen stone in weight. On the dawn of Christmas Eve, Harding was, as usual, on duty at Bethlehem, and visited the Grotto of the Stable, and, as he had expected, found in the eighteen-inches wide rock-hewn passage from the Chapel of the Innocents to the Stable, the electric lamp-standard, with a coil of flexible wire all ready to hand for the Friar's attempt.

At the conclusion of his long turn of duty at Bethlehem, Abdel Latif returned home, with forty-eight hours' leave from duty in which to recuperate. His wife, Amina, had an excellent meal prepared for her ponderous husband, and, in high good humour, after doing full justice to it, he loosened his belt, and reached for the mouthpiece of the snake-like tube of his *narghileh*, whilst his wife hastened to put a piece of glowing charcoal on the dampened tobacco in its bowl. A few ecstatic whiffs, whilst the water in the pipe bubbled and churned, and then, complacently, he said:

"*Wullahi*, but thou art a good wife to thy husband, O Jewel of my Soul, and well worth the eighty pounds in gold napoleons I paid thy father, that old fox, Nureddin, for thee. Fine and tasty is thy cooking, and, *inshallah*, if the child thou bearest proves to be a boy, my cup of joy will be indeed full."

Flushing with pleasure at her husband's praise, Amina asked how he had fared at Bethlehem, and how he had managed to obtain forty-eight hours' leave. He replied:

'Twas in this wise, O mother of him who is to be. You know Harding Effendi, my officer? What's that? you say that you have seen him? Then remember, Amina, that a good Moslem woman, although she be veiled, should look on no man's face other than her husband's. However, let that pass,' he resumed, refusing to allow anything to sully the pleasure of the day. 'Well, Harding Effendi called me, also my brothers, sons of the same mother, Said, Ahmet, Hussein and Mohammed, as well as the sons of my father's brother, Ibrahim and Abdel Razek, also the sons of my father's sister, Jamal and Saifeddin, together with six men from the Jebel Nablus, and made us a speech. He first told us that he wanted to play a jest, and also wished to win a wager that he had with a *khouri*, a priest of the Christians, may their Religion be accursed,' and removing the mouthpiece of his pipe, spat dutifully, but perfunctorily on the floor, to Amina's ill-concealed annoyance, 'by which he had bet that he could make more converts than any cleric of them all. Therefore he asked us if we would help him win this wager. Silently we listened, was he asking us to renounce the Faith of the Prophet, on whose name be Peace? But no, 'twas but a jest. He said that when the English *rahib*, monk, whom I often see going to the Effendi's quarters in the Barracks, and who is a good man despite his profession—for did he not get me leave once when I begged him to intercede with the Effendi for me?—should come to us and ask us if we were Christians, we should reply that we were. The Effendi said that if we did this well we should each receive forty-eight hours' leave to go back to our city of Hebron, *El Medina ul Khalil*, where we go in an hour's time, and where, the family reunited, there will be much feasting. I tell thee, Amina, Ahmet has already sent word to our father that we come. Oh, the pleasures that we shall have, first—'

'But will my lord not finish the tale of how he obtained this so gracious leave?' asked Amina, anxious to hear the remainder of the story.

'Ah, yes, yes,' resumed Abdel Latif, a merry twinkle in his eyes. 'When we agreed to his proposal, for, look you, he does many things for us that other of the *Zubat*, Officers, never do for the men, he marched us all down to the cave in which the *Nosranis* believe that the Master of their Faith was born, and then in a narrow passage that runs to another cave, he bade us all stand in line. We were not to prevent anyone coming through, but, at

the same time, we were not to move from where he had put us. Presently, after much squeezing, the *rahīb*, the friend of the Effendi, managed, with much labour, to pass us, and, in that close air, he nearly stifled with the violence of his exertions, for as you know, O Joy of my Heart, neither I nor my brethren are small, whilst the men from the north were as big as we. At last he was through, angrily he stalked up to the Effendi who stood within the Stable-cave, and spoke to him, the meaning of which was translated to us later by Jamal, the son of my aunt, who works as a clerk in the Effendi's office and speaks the language of the *Ingliz*.

"What is the meaning of this? Why are you and your men here, where police are not to enter except to maintain the public peace?" asked the *rahīb*.

"We are attending the services, Father," answered the Effendi, "surely you will not prevent these poor men of mine from praying."

"They are not Christians," replied the other.

"Ask them, Father," answered Harding Effendi. And then, *Mashallah*, Amina, my Wife, did this little priest, the top of whose shaven head hardly reached the upper tunic-button of Hussein my brother, who is the shortest of all of us, come to each one of us, and, touching us on the breast with his finger say, in Arabic that would have brought tears of laughter to your eyes, O Pearl of my Delight, had your ears heard it, "*Enta Latini?*" As one man we replied that we were Christians and looked at the Effendi for approval, who glanced smilingly at us. Then came the *rahīb* to Ibrahim, the son of my uncle, who is the fattest of us all, and who was sitting, at the Effendi's order, on a small electric lamp and some wire. The priest then went to the Effendi and angrily asked why Ibrahim sat on his lamp and was told that the man was sick, but so strong were his religious convictions that he would not attend the Parade of the Sick Ones, but strongly desired to witness the blessed ceremonies that would occur in the near-by cave, which we could all see. Then with rage did the little *rahīb* leave us, to return in half an hour and order the Effendi to remove us.

But the Effendi replied, saying that, as it was a day of *Eid*, of festival, the men had asked to attend three services one after the other, and that rather than disappoint them he had allowed them to do so. It appears that there is an ancient custom amongst the Franks of attending three services on the *Eid el Mullad* (Christmas) and that he held the *rahīb* to the old usage. Snorting in his short grey beard, the little priest again wriggled

and squeezed his way through us and disappeared, returning at the conclusion of the third service, only to be told that we were attending three times three services, which, Star of my Life, we did, in the heat and airlessness of that underground passage, whilst fat Ibrahim snored the hours away on his perch on top of the lamp.

'And now the Effendi is happy, for he has won his wager, and we also are happy, for at noon my brothers come with cars and we all go to Hebron to spend two days in happy feasting in our father's house, for all is quiet amongst those Christian dogs at Bethlehem this year, and no men are required to perform extra duty in that wearying little town.'

*DOMINE, CREDO.*

I.

WHAT though I die? I live with you for ever:  
I shall not leave you, dearest, nor your light  
Be quenched for me in darkness; Death's endeavour  
Like rainfall, will refresh me, it will never  
Make barren pasture of the infinite.

II.

You will not leave me. Though the harp be broken  
Whereon for me Earth's melodies are played,  
Though all your love unleashed no word betoken,  
You will be here until I too am woken  
To that whereof Eternity is made.

III.

No love, no laughter, nought of Beauty's reaping  
Passes away and is no more our own:  
To Life we go, to wakefulness not sleeping,  
To labour not to rest, to joy not weeping,  
And we shall be together, not alone.

GORELL.

## A NEW LINE.

BY CAPTAIN G. A. WILLIAMS.

THINGS were bad on the river ; shockingly bad, and there seemed no immediate prospect of improvement. The whole of West Africa, of course, had been badly hit by the world slump, and to the people living on the Oshani River the fact that the value of a puncheon of palm oil was now worth only a quarter of what it had been a year or two ago had come as a particularly severe shock, as their whole life was bound up in the manufacture and sale of that nauseous-looking commodity.

At first most of the middle-men who worked the river believed it was simply a ramp on the part of the Traders to make a larger profit, and they tried to call the bluff by storing and withholding produce ; but when, instead of rising, the price steadily fell, they had to sell off their hoarded puncheons of oil at a heavy loss and were left bewailing.

Many of them, in fact, went out of business altogether and retired to their mud huts and yam farms with what they could save out of the wreck. One of them, Nkwerri by name, a middle-aged negro of amiable appearance whose paunch was a tribute to more prosperous times, had been more astute than most in gauging the real state of the market and had gone into temporary retirement with a very adequate nest-egg which he intended to invest for his profit when he could discover a more or less gilt-edged security in these hectic times.

A not unnatural corollary of the slump was a rising feeling of discontent amongst the natives of Mandataria who could not understand world depression, and only realised that they still had to pay the small poll-tax in force in the Colony, and that goods they wanted to buy in the trading canteens were just as expensive as before. In consequence, minor disturbances broke out in various parts of the country and the Powers That Be, seeing that something was wrong but not being quite certain what, ordered an enquiry into the trouble. From this it transpired that the unrest could be traced to two sources : bad trade conditions and the divorcement of the natives from many harmless customs and their



substitution by semi-European rules and regulations which were frequently not understood, and at times were quite at variance with a tradition hallowed by centuries of use.

To remedy this state of affairs Administrative Officers were everywhere advised to delve deeply into native law and custom and, where they found harmless customs had been arbitrarily displaced by unpopular Native Court rules, to replace the latter by the former. It can be readily understood that this was by no means easy. Many customs considered very beneficial by the natives could not commend themselves to European authority; it was not easy, for instance, to inform a meeting it was intended to revive their good customs and then to tell them that they were forbidden to remove a horrid stigma, almost a curse, from their house by throwing away new-born twins into the bush.

On one point, however, Gammon, an A.D.O. of two or three years' service, thought he was on absolutely safe ground. In old days, the Elders told him, if a woman committed adultery her lover paid certain compensation to the husband in order that purification sacrifices might be performed, and that was that; except that the offending woman probably realised her husband's displeasure through the medium of a stick; but in recent years, they said, the Native Courts had insisted on making adultery a criminal offence and the usual punishment was imprisonment or fine for man and woman. In consequence the husband not only did not get his compensation but his wife was *ipso facto* sent to prison for a month or two if he lodged a complaint against her lover. They asked that the old custom might be revived.

This seemed to Gammon to be a reasonable request and he decided to probe further into the matter and said he wanted fuller information as to what compensation had been customary in the past when he next visited the area.

It was then that an idea for future profit presented itself to Nkwerri and he was not slow to act upon it. Before the A.D.O. visited the river again he had taken counsel with all the Elders and suggested to them that as they were all old men and many of them had young wives it would be well to suggest a high figure for any lapse of virtue. As a man of known wealth and ability his suggestion carried weight and eventually the Elders agreed that five pounds, a goat, a white cock and ten fine yams would be a suitable compensation. Gammon, a humane man, argued that in these hard times the amount was very high, but the Elders insisted that such

was their custom from early times so he eventually agreed, and sanction was obtained from higher authority for recognition of the new arrangement.

Friend Nkwerri then began to get busy. The marriage customs of the people of the Oshani River were much the same as those of other West African tribes. A dowry was payable on all wives, dependent on their charms or the wealth of the negotiating parties. It usually ran to about fifteen pounds, of which the suitor would pay six pounds down and the balance by instalments. As soon as he had paid the preliminary six pounds the girl became his wife according to native custom. Now the girls of the tribe were no better than they ought to have been and Nkwerri knew from the experiences of his own youth that when they were married to old and unattractive husbands it was by no means difficult to persuade them to seek consolation for their unhappy state.

Without more ado he began to negotiate for marriage with a large number of fathers on the river, who were only too glad to hand over their daughters to such a substantial man. In every case the damsel he chose was personable beyond the ordinary to native eyes and in every case he paid his six pounds down, and got a receipt for it, too. Almost as soon as these arrangements were completed he gave notice to all his wives and fathers-in-law that he was going away on a matter of important business for three months and that during that time his wives could return to their parents' houses if they wished. Then he went away; but his spies were legion and well placed and when he had received all the information he required he came back.

Very soon afterwards the clerk of the Native Court was requested by him to issue about forty summonses, in each case claiming five pounds, a goat, a white cock, and ten fine yams from various Lotharios of the tribe who had taken advantage of his absence, as he well knew they would, to make very free with his new wives, each of whom had dallied with four or five different men.

The cases duly came to Court and, on the advice of the Elders, judgment was entered in his favour in each case, as he had abundant evidence to support his allegations. Nkwerri then sat back and rubbed his hands at the prospect of making four or five hundred per cent. profit on his investment in human frailty.

It so happened that Gammon had gone on leave just before this and the Division had been taken over by one Roberts who had done about fourteen years on the Coast and who had, as it happened,

served in the Division some years before. Ere long his office at Divisional Headquarters was besieged by the unhappy young men of the Oshani River who had found their love-making so expensive. Roberts promised to look into the matter when next he visited the river, and with that they went away content.

A month later after a weary canoe journey he reached Asama, where the Native Court for the river people sat, and after exchanging salutations with the Elders he called for the Court record books and looked through the cases for review. It did not take long for him to note the surprising number of cases in which Nkwerri was plaintiff—in fact these *causes célèbres* had monopolised the attention of the Court for the whole of one sitting. The name Nkwerri seemed vaguely familiar to him and he cudgelled his memory for his previous knowledge of the man, but in vain for the time. A few discreet enquiries gave him the history of the recent boom in marriages on the river and it did not take him long to put two and two together. There followed secret consultations with somewhat nervous Elders who realised that this D.O. was not nearly so easily gulled as his predecessor.

Over a last pipe before turning in Roberts suddenly remembered what his memory had been seeking and he sent a messenger into Headquarters for the Provincial Court record book of some eight years ago and next day gave notice that he would hear appeals on the following day.

In due course the disgruntled lovers came into the Native Court and made their appeal against the amount awarded against them. They all pleaded that it was far in excess of what was customary; promiscuity, they argued, was natural to them and would be impossible on the terms now laid down in the Court. Roberts heard them out and then asked the plaintiff if he had anything to say. Nkwerri had—a lot. In fulsome phrases he praised the D.O. for allowing revival of decent native customs; insisted on the immemorial usage of the compensation claimed; made pathetic reference to his wounded feelings as a doting husband and finally begged that his marital future might be made secure by the confirmation of the Native Court's award as a warning to evil-doers.

Roberts eyed him for a moment and knew his memory had not played him false. 'Your name is Ezomo Nkwerri, I think,' he said, 'and some eight years ago you were living at Asakpo on this river?' Nkwerri agreed.

'Perhaps you remember that about that time you were yourself

charged with the very offence you now complain of,' continued the D.O. 'One Egba took action against you in this Court and the case was transferred to the Provincial Court for trial at your request.' Again Nkwerri agreed, somewhat shakily.

'In that case,' said Roberts, 'you pleaded that your opponent had no right to charge you because you had paid the necessary compensation to him. Perhaps you remember the amount?'

Nkwerri, now most unhappy, said he did not.

'You told the Court,' he was informed, 'that the compensation was sixty manillas, a white cock and a bunch of plantains. Not only did you call several Elders to prove this was correct, but you also had the nerve to call as witnesses other husbands with whose wives you had made free to testify that you had settled with them on those terms. As a result you were acquitted.'

'The record is wrong, Your Honour,' quaked Nkwerri; 'the clerk who wrote it was my enemy.'

'On the contrary,' replied the D.O. 'I myself heard the case and wrote down the evidence. Have you anything more to say?'

Nkwerri subsided like a pricked bubble amidst the guffaws of the assembled populace.

'In this case,' continued Roberts, 'if I confirm the judgment a great number of wronged husbands will bring actions against you for past misdoings and, in fact, I know perfectly well that the real compensation is sixty manillas as you claimed years ago. A manilla was then worth twopence; now it is worth a halfpenny, so if we amend the verdict to allow you five shillings compensation plus a white cock and a bunch of plantains it would seem to be fair, and do not forget you have to complete dowry on all these young women within a reasonable time. Trade is bad, I know,' he added, 'but in future, Nkwerri, I should confine your attention to palm oil instead of women. You may go.'

And Nkwerri went—burdened with white cocks and encumbered with plantains which his rebellious wives resolutely refused to carry for him.

## WILLIAM WILBERFORCE'S HONEYMOON.

BY JOHN WILBERFORCE.

MUCH has recently been said about William Wilberforce's long struggle for the abolition, firstly and chiefly of the Slave Trade, and lastly of that monster's mother, Slavery. Handicapped as he was with a frail physique and poor sight he certainly needed a woman's care, and received it in full measure from his wife, who is scarcely mentioned in the *Life* by his sons or by any subsequent biographer. Mrs. William Wilberforce was Barbara Ann Spooner, the daughter of a country banker, Isaac Spooner, of Elmdon in Warwickshire. On her mother's side she was the eighth 'Barbara,' daughter of Barbara in unbroken succession. One of her ancestors, Sir Henry Slingsby, was beheaded on Tower Hill for loyalty to Charles the First.

William Wilberforce met Barbara at Bath, and his friends Henry Thornton and Dr. Milner, Dean of Carlisle, came from London with the express purpose of advising him on the matter of his proposed marriage, and of giving their opinion of the lady. Henry Thornton writes to his sister, Viscountess Balgonie, as follows :

' House of Commons,  
' 2nd May, 1797.

' MY DEAR SISTER,—

' I find that Sam has already told you the news of Wilberforce's being about to follow my laudable example and to be united to a young lady whom he has seen at Bath—I have been down to him there in order to talk with him on the subject, and also to see the lady—the Dean of Carlisle going with me.

' She is a very pleasing young woman about 25, rather handsome than otherwise, with much feeling, great openness and simplicity of character, and unquestionably of a very pious disposition which she has manifested by differing in many points (particularly in not going to public places) from almost all her family and connections, whose affection nevertheless she has retained in a remarkable degree. Her fortune is small (£5000) and the family is not by any means grand, her father being merely a thriving merchant and country banker with a large family. They live 6 miles from

Birmingham—the name is Spooner. The match is not what the world will account (according to Mr. Gisborne's account of the world's estimation of the matter) *to be a good match*—that is to say he has not insisted on some things which the world most esteems, because he has thought it indispensable that the lady should have certain other qualities, which as W.'s book will tell them are not very common. She seems indeed a very pleasing as well as pious woman, and I hope that she and my wife will prove as good friends as W. and I are. I wish you would tell me at a future time what you hear said on the subject. In a day or two more the news will be fully known here, and it is partly so now. I reckon he will go down again to Bath (for he is now in Town) in 2 or 3 weeks, and that the marriage will then take place, after which if he will come to town it will only be incog.—he must now have a country house on a simple but comfortable plan, and he will continue in his present town house. I hope you have got his book. Pray give it about among your grand people who have not got it. It is much read here and has gone through one edition.

'Yours,

'H. THORNTON.'

Barbara was the only religious member of a worldly family, and before her marriage had confided to Mr. Wilberforce all her difficulties. Her piety may have appealed to him even more than her beauty, who can say? Henry Thornton speaks of her as a 'pleasing' young woman, 'rather handsome than otherwise'; other friends describe her appearance in more glowing terms, but from that time to the end of his life William was her devoted lover. There is a pastel of her by Russell in the possession of Arnold Reckitt, of Brantinghamthorpe, East Yorks.; in which the artist depicts a young woman with dark eyebrows, and sparkling brown eyes which light up the countenance with intelligence; she wears a turban and a white dress. Her intelligent expression is noted by her great-niece Mrs. Inge, who also possesses a portrait of her.

We are not told of the verdict of the Dean of Carlisle on Barbara Spooner, but he seems later to have made the Wilberforce house his home, and to have given her many valuable and curious medical prescriptions, copied in her own excellent handwriting.

The wisdom of the step Wilberforce contemplated was questioned by others of his friends, notably by Hannah More to whom he had confided his attachment, and who advised him 'not to be too precipitate, to linger some time before actually proposing, and



to be quite sure that the young lady's family is a good enough one for you to connect yourself with.'

If she could have looked into the future Hannah More, who may be said to have revered Episcopacy next to Royalty, would have seen two of the Spooner family wives of Archbishops of Canterbury, Catherine a woman of great charm and ability, wife of Archbishop Tait, and her daughter the wife of Archbishop Davidson. I may mention that the wife of Dean Inge is also a Spooner: and the Dean of St. Paul's, if not a bishop, ranks high in the hierarchy.

Needless to say, the advice to hesitate and to linger some time before proposing did not appeal to an ardent lover, on which Hannah More bestowed her benediction in these words:

'May God Almighty shower down His best blessings on your head and that of the sweet woman you have chosen. I am both weeping and praying for you. May you promote each other's eternal as well as temporal happiness! I feel so affected that I am hardly able to write, but I assure you it is with pure satisfaction, only that I am so inconveniently formed in my mind that pleasure agitates me almost as much as sorrow. I must scold you a little for your dullness in accusing me of coldness and procrastination. That W. W. should be *dull* of perception and H. M. cold and procrastinating would be a novelty in both our histories! I never had one doubt, glancing towards the lady (for Patty—her sister—'will tell you that I also fell in love with her at first sight); the caution I suggested was merely on the score of *family* connections, etc., which, though very subordinate, are yet of no contemptible importance, and which I thought worth enquiring into. I believe hers are respectable, but as I am really ignorant on that subject I wished you to enquire.'

Miss More writes again with more composure when the marriage is inevitable, giving to the young couple advice, which has all the weight that could be expected from a spinster of her age and experience:

'I earnestly pray that this union while it will, I trust, greatly tend to soften the cares and alleviate the solitudes of your very anxious and laborious life, may also multiply your spiritual blessings. The piety of the fair companion you have chosen gives me a comfortable hope that marriage in your case, so far from dangerously entangling you more and more in the cares of this perishable world may, on the contrary, help to speed you in the race of glory

and honour and immortality. As I conceive you both to have warm and affectionate tempers, your difficulty and danger may probably arise from those very qualities which will at the same time so essentially contribute to your happiness if wisely used. I conceive you both therefore as being in turn called upon to act the part of *Swift's Flapper*, and of occasionally reminding each other that *this is not your rest*. But on the other hand, what a delightful consideration is it for two married persons, who are true Christians, to be able to say even in these days, "This is not our happiest state, but through the tender mercies of our God and the merits of our Redeemer, we have a future blessedness to look to, with which the highest pleasures of this imperfect and transitory world are not worthy to be compared." What a joy to reflect that the smallest act of self-denial for God's sake, the smallest renunciation of our pleasure for His glory shall not lose its reward! . . .

'My affectionate congratulations to your fair friend. Heartily commending you both to the especial favour of God I remain, my dear Sir,

'Her and your very affectionate and faithful,

'H. MORE.'

The marriage took place on May 30, 1797, and many years later Barbara Wilberforce writes of her honeymoon spent at Cowslip Green in the company of the Misses More :

'William Wilberforce had always intended, if he married, to take his lady to see Mrs. H. More's schools as soon as possible after his wedding. Accordingly he contrived that we should pass our first Sunday at Cowslip Green. Whit-Sunday we therefore spent with the sisters. We arrived on Saturday to dinner, and were most hospitably welcomed with a frankness and cordiality and almost overwhelming expressions of delight but seldom met with in the more polished circles, and which owed their charm to being believed to be truly sincere. The ladies were not polished characters, excepting Mrs. H. More who had been accustomed to the highest society, and to flattering attentions and admiration from literary circles, and literary high-born dames, which might well have dazzled and bewildered the soberest and steadiest mind. That her sisters should consider her as they evidently did as the first of human beings is not to be wondered at, though it would have been more in accordance with the general usages of society to have repressed a little of their extreme admiration before visitors and strangers.

'At Cowslip Green where we paid this bridal visit the house

was very small—so small that the sisters had but just room for your father,' (she is writing to her son Samuel) 'and his man servant and Mrs. H. More when she announced this and begged the bride to come without a handmaid to attend her, offered her own service in Prior's words in his *Henry and Emma*: "I'll weave her ringlets, and I'll plait her hair." (I must quote from memory because I have not Prior, and think I do not quote accurately, but the line is well known.) Early on Sunday morning all was alive in the little mansion, and after breakfast our chariot and chaise were at the door. It was arranged that your father and I should go together,' (it will be remembered that this was their honeymoon), 'and the two sisters occupy their chaise. This was agreeable to both parties, as much of the day was to be spent on the road, giving time for quiet reflection and meditation—preventing the necessity of constant conversation, and enabling your father also to employ me in reading aloud, for his eyes were then very indifferent. Arriving at Shipham we found the congregation assembled for Morning Service, and were conducted by the excellent Rector through a row of his parishioners up the little gravel walk, all strewed with flowers in honour of the bride, to the church. We were most interested with the appearance of the large congregation. The service was well performed, the appropriate wedding psalm was sung, and the school children were assembled at the end of the service.'

The account goes on to relate the number of schools the bridal couple visited on this honeymoon Sunday, the village clubs, started by Miss H. More and her sisters, the way she and Mr. Harford warded off the acute misery of the miners, caused by the failure in demand for the ore of one of the mines, and how Mr. Wilberforce 'aided and abetted' these and other philanthropic schemes.

To the end of her life, their long correspondence shows that in all her troubles, domestic, parochial and financial, Hannah More turned to Mr. Wilberforce for sympathy and help: e.g. a deficit of £325 has to be met for her charities—he described her as his almoner—and constantly sums varying from £100 upward were required to enable her to carry on.

It is a matter for regret that no letter remains from Barbara to her husband. She survived him many years, and, being a humble-minded woman, in all probability rated her correspondence as valueless and consigned it to the waste-paper basket. But she treasured among others the following from him to her:

‘Clapham,  
‘Sunday, 1½ o’clock.

‘MY DEAREST LOVE,—

‘Conceiving that what has been contained in my former letters may have appeared so like an acquiescence in your wish to come up to me, and that you may be making preparations for that purpose; and having heard some circumstances which at least suggest the expediency of pausing on that measure, I have resolved to take up the pen though it be Sunday and to send this letter to London, that it may go by the Stage and convey to thee with ye tender Love of thy Wilber, the Wish I feel that you should wait till you hear farther from me, and while I have no objections to your continuing as ready as you conveniently can, to come off on receiving my signal to set sail, yet that you should not actually weigh anchor and commence your Voyage, without hearing farther from me. I cannot now go into particulars, nor will you wish me to do so. I will only state that if you don’t soon receive my permission to drive up to me, I hope to drive down to you and stay with you till the beginning of February. I may probably be able to judge of this in 3 or 4 days; you may be assured that I shall admit no needless delay, and I shall not be surprised, if on this day Sennight I am by my Love’s Side, beholding that look of affection with my Bodily Eyes, which is now distinctly visible to my Mental. And, now, after begging you to remember me to Miss Sabine and to kiss ye dear Children, assuring them, that I never feel to love them or you either so well as on Sunday, which I would humbly accept as a blessed foretaste of that affection which we shall continue to feel for each other in ye Eternal Sabbath of ye Heavenly State—Let me lay aside the pen for Prayer and praise, and meditation. In these spiritual offices, my beloved B. will not be forgotten. I trust I may adopt in this respect ye Language of Edwards, (would to God that I could more generally appropriate his Words) our love has been spiritual and we may therefore hope it will be lasting.—Yes, my dearest Barbara, it was ye good Providence of God, I trust, which bound up our Interests together, and which in His good time, brought us into each other’s way at once to feel that Love, which I trust was and is to endure for ever.—We live in a stormy world, and our present Sublunary prospects are peculiarly dark and lowering, but Blessed be God, our Home is happy, Peace and Love, ye best even of Heaven’s enjoyments, flourish in our union, and we still more can unite in prayer to that Gracious Being who has promised that He will watch over His people with unceasing care and tenderness, that He will lay on them no greater burthen than they are able to bear, and that all shall finally work together for good to them that Love Him.—To Him then let us

raise the voice of praise as well as of Supplication. Our Cup overflows with Blessings, and let us strive to live and act under a more abiding and enlivening Sense of our deep and never-ending obligations to Him. Alas! That we should ever have occasion to alloy the pure gold of thanksgiving with ye dross of complaints, and the sighings of contrition—our sins, negligences and ignorances alas! alas! Well, my Darling; let us mutually strive to assist each other, with frankness, which none can so well practise towards each other as they who are sure of each other's Love, let us correct each other's infirmities, and thus endeavour to increase each other's Happiness not only here but Hereafter also.

'May Our God and Our Blessed Lord and Saviour be for ever with thee and ours—Thy Shepherd, thy friend, thy protector, thy Guide, thy Consolation.

'Farewell, farewell my best Beloved. I trust it will not be long before we meet again. Meanwhile I am most tenderly thine,

'W. WILBERFORCE.'

'I hope I have not scribbled so fast as to be illegible—the truth is I did not think of writing above a few lines when I began, but I was drawn on by my desire to spend a few minutes this day with my Beloved—I shall remember thee this evening.'

My great-grandmother had her detractors and one of them, as frequently happens, was a lady connected with the family by marriage: Miss Marianne Thornton, daughter of Henry Thornton, who describes her thus:

'A woman of selfish aims, that is if selfishness can be so called, which took the shape of idolatry of her husband, and thinking everything in the world ought to give way to what she thought expedient for him. She was extremely handsome, and in some ways very clever. Instead of making his house attractive to the crowds of superior people he invited, her love of economy and her dislike to exertion made her anything but a hospitable hostess. At the Wilberforce breakfast when he chiefly received company there was the most extraordinary mixture of guests, and an equally strange want of the common usages of life. To use a Yorkshire expression of his, everybody was expected to fend for themselves, he was so short-sighted that he could see nothing beyond his own plate which Mrs. Wilberforce took care to supply with all he wanted till the Dean (Milner of Carlisle's) stentorian voice was heard roaring out "there was nothing on earth to eat," and desiring the servants to bring more bread and butter, and he would add "And bring plenty without limit," while Mr. Wilberforce would join in, "Thank you kindly, Milner, for seeing to these things."'

Miss Thornton goes on to say, that no one

'would ever have known how much of the angel there was in him, if they had not seen his behaviour to one whose different tastes must have tried his patience so much. But never for a moment did it fail; he was always throwing his shield over her, bringing forward her best points and trying to persuade other people that if they knew her well they would value her more.

'She was a religious woman, but lived much with a lower set of people professors as they would have called themselves, who had a great deal of pious phraseology.'

In fairness to my "extremely handsome" great-grandmother one must remember that she was thirteen years younger than William, whose health she had jealously to guard, even from the first.

Her task too became a more and more difficult one, his dwindling fortune—the greater part of it had been spent in furthering his lifelong work and on other charities—must have been a constant source of worry to a woman of economical disposition who yet with all her economies enjoins her son in many of her letters to 'remember the Poor.'

'Never was there a tenderer or more loving mother, rarely one more sensible or more really able,' so said her son Samuel (afterwards Bishop of Oxford and Winchester); he also remarks that she had the faculty of writing, talking and listening all at once.

Wilberforce writes to his friend Tom Babington of the 'blessed consequences of his marriage with Barbara Spooner,' when financial troubles had rendered him homeless :

*' March 14, 1831.*

'I own, however, that it is a sore trial to me to be compelled to quit my garden, and still more my books, and more than this to have no residence to which I can ask an old friend to take a dinner or a bed with me. Even our great Apostle thought the having no certain dwelling-place not unworthy of being classed (with others doubtless of a far higher value) in the catalogue of his sufferings. . . . What a blessing did your kindness do me when you became the instrument of my forming that matrimonial connection, of which I now feel the blessed consequences even more than at any former period. What cause have I for thankfulness in the principles and characters of my 3 younger Boys. I am I believe the only living father of 3 First Class Sons at Oxford. But far more does it rejoice me that they are such as I may contemplate with a humble but confident persuasion that they are Children of God.'



I conclude with an earlier letter of Wilberforce's to his wife :

' Dec. 4, 1813.

' MY DEAREST BARBARA,—

' . . . I have thought of thee to-day almost constantly with more tenderness than I thought had belonged to me now.—I always miss thee more on Sunday than on any other day as before I ever knew thee, it was on Sundays that I chiefly wanted thee—and it has been a part of my thanksgiving to that gracious Being who has loaded me with Benefits that he has blessed me with so kind so faithful a wife, so suited in all respects to my temper and wishes and above all so enriched with those best Blessings which render her a Help to me in my spiritual progress instead of an incumbrance.

' I must stop, if I do not resume my pen to-night may a gracious God comfort and support and prosper and watch over thee and if it be his will restore thee to my arms in peace . . . May God ever bless and preserve thee, thou dearest of my Soul.

' Yours ever,

' W. W.'

### HELL.

—ONLY a dream that came in summer night :

-You asked for comfort, and my lips were dumb ;

You cried for succour, and I could not come.

—Only a dream that passed with morning light :

But I shall not forget, I know full well ;

In that dread night I had been down in hell.

REGINALD C. EVA.

## *A COCK TO ÆSCULAPIUS.*

BY E. LLOYD BARRITT.

APOLLO was no ordinary barn fowl. He was a pedigree cockerel, brought from Rhodes to Athens by a master mariner whom Cleomenes knew well. None of your pirate stuff. That might be all right when it was a question of jewellery for the women-folk. But Cleomenes took no chances with his birds.

The Island of Rhodes was famous for this particular strain. It was famous for other things as well—its university and the huge statue of Apollo which stood across the mouth of the harbour, one foot on either side, so that ships sailed underneath. Practically everything in Rhodes was sacred to the sun-god. Not everything, Cleomenes reflected, did him as much credit as the cockerel.

Not that Cleomenes approved of giving the names of gods to birds or other animals. That was Gorgo's doing, and Cleomenes pretended he knew nothing about it. Just as though Athenian fathers were not expected to take full responsibility for their children's actions. But Cleomenes, gazing fondly at the cockerel, his crimson crest, his glossy arching neck, the splendour of his tail feathers, and the nervous strength of his clean straight legs, felt that the sun-god had no cause for complaint. After all, the gods, though terrible sometimes, were not petty or cantankerous. And Gorgo was but a child.

Cleomenes had a patch of ground which he divided into halves. On one side he grew lettuces and on the other he raised poultry. This side was enclosed in a fence of tall bulrushes which he had pulled up from the marshes down by the Cephisus. Every spring he changed the plots over, digging up the poultry-run for his lettuces and moving his fowl-house and palisade over to the lettuce plot. His eggs and his lettuces always sold well and he got fancy prices for his sittings.

When Apollo was a fluffy yellow chick, he loved to run about the world and explore. When let out in the morning, he spent the first few minutes scampering about, half-running, half-flying, tasting the pure joys of freedom and flapping his tiny wings like a little yellow butterfly. He was always challenging the other chicks :

'I can run faster than you!' 'You can't!' 'Yes, I can. Look!' and that would start a Caucus-race, chicks fluttering and running in all directions, and of course everybody won and had to receive a prize. Apollo took care to present himself first whenever the prizes were given out, and he never minded kicking away a few of the others in order to secure the best place at the feeding-trough. He was always the last to return to the sheltering wing of their foster-mother, when she clucked a warning about damp feet or an approaching shower. This does not mean that he was ever left on the outside to take the cold air, because he pushed and scratched and fought his way between his little brothers and sisters until he felt warm soft feathers all round him.

But he liked best to run out and investigate all the interesting specks he found lying about in the poultry-run. There were black and brown and white and green specks. Some of them moved and some did not. He liked the ones that moved best. They tasted nicer. Sometimes he wasted a lot of time on things that could not be eaten at all, trying to peck off the embroidery on an old piece of rag, torn from a discarded tunic, or the letters scratched by some eager voter on a broken piece of shard.

One eventful morning one of his sisters found an inch or so of yellow straw and ran round and round with it, screaming at the top of her voice. Apollo suddenly went mad with fury. Placing himself squarely in her path, he seized the straw and attempted to take it from her, but she held on with incredible madness and persistence. A tug of war followed, both antagonists planting their feet firmly in the soil and pulling back with all their might. It was a tense and awful moment. Apollo felt that nothing short of death would ever make him relinquish that straw. Just then a bystander, seeking a mean advantage, pecked at the tautened straw so that it snapped. Apollo fell over backwards, but recovering himself quickly pursued the intruder, only to find that the prize was by that time completely disintegrated. From that time onward, he found that specks had lost some of their charm for him and preferred long thin things, especially when they wriggled.

Soon after that he had another great adventure. In response to a terrified squawk all the other chicks ran for shelter under their mother's wing, but Apollo, obeying the impulse of an irresistible curiosity, remained outside and perceived three dark menacing shadows pass slowly over the ground in a sudden cessation of sound, a silence that seemed in itself to be the end of all things. But just

when the mounting terror would have burst his heart, the shadows passed away, the sunlight lay unbroken on the ground, he heard the familiar babel of voices chattering in wild relief, and the shrill clucking of his foster-mother scolding him for his temerity. What he did not hear was Cleomenes remarking to a neighbour: 'Drat those doves! Look how they've frightened my chickens. Why in Hades can't Aphrodite keep her doves to herself, I'd like to know!'

After that experience, there was little in life that could scare Apollo. He was not very frightened even when Gorgo picked him up in her plump little hands and tried to stroke him and talk baby language to him. As he grew older he became more expert in avoiding her, but she generally managed to pick him up at least once a day, and although he pecked her as a matter of principle he did not really mind.

Cleomenes, of course, was always scolding her, but he was singularly weak on that point. Not by any means a man who let his women-folk override him, he somehow sensed that Gorgo had the same feeling for birds as he had himself, and he could not bring himself to deny her the consolation of their soft feathers and warm little bodies. So he caught himself telling her in one and the same breath not to pick them up at all, and if she must pick them up, to hold them properly with her hands over their wings. And Gorgo serenely disobeyed him. She would stand holding Apollo's feet in the palm of her hand—she always said she was warming them—encouraging him to flap his wings, while she admired their growing span and the rich deepening tone of their feathers.

Apollo was fourteen months old and in the prime of his beauty when he first saw Socrates. Little did either of them dream that the Fates were to link them together in death before the end of the year. The philosopher had just chanced in one fine evening to admire Cleomenes' fowls, about which, he said, he had heard so much.

'Pity my ignorance,' he had said to Cleomenes, 'since I know nothing about poultry rearing, and you, it seems, are a great expert. But tell me about this cock of yours, since it is evident that you prize him highly, and he is indeed a noble bird. In what would you say that his virtue consists?'

'Well,' said Cleomenes, 'can't you see for yourself that he is very beautiful?'

'A good and sufficient answer,' said Socrates, 'since beauty is in itself a great virtue and worthy to be prized. As Menelaus said of Helen, after the capture of Troy, "She is beautiful and therefore

she must live." But come now, Cleomenes, do not be impatient with us, but tell us this also: Has your cock a beauty of the mind to match the beauty of his body? In other words, is he as wise as he is beautiful? For I suppose you will admit that wisdom is to the mind what beauty is to the body?'

'Yes, he is wise,' said Cleomenes, willing to praise his favourite. 'He knows the hens that belong to him. He keeps them together and prevents them quarrelling.'

'In what sense do you mean that they belong to him?' Socrates replied, smiling sweetly. 'Forgive my stupidity, Cleomenes, but do I understand you to say that any person or animal can belong to any other person or animal in any sense whatever?'

Cleomenes threw a swift glance round his poultry run.

'Any chap,' he began ponderously, 'any chap who comes here trying to argue that these birds don't belong to me is no better than a common thief and that's the name I'd give him to his face!'

And as far as Cleomenes was concerned, that settled the matter. He was sorry to have to speak so to an old man like Socrates, but really he had asked for it. There were spectators present too, for one or two neighbours had gathered round, and there were some of the young bloods who always followed Socrates about and called themselves his disciples. These joined in the laugh against their master, with more merriment than Cleomenes thought proper to the occasion. He was hoping that Socrates would slink off then and not put himself in the way of getting snubbed again. But apparently Socrates had no intention of doing that. He seated himself on an old bench under the olive-tree and began again with his questions. But now they were simple obvious questions without any sting in them. The sort of question that suggested its own answer. Cleomenes grew bored and inattentive, but gave perfunctory answers out of politeness whenever Socrates paused.

It was growing dusk and the birds were putting themselves to bed. Now that Apollo was grown up, he took his place sedately on the perch among the hens. The younger ones bedded themselves down all together in a compact mass on the floor in one corner of the hen-house. In the days of his youth Apollo had been used to sleep right in the middle of them. First he waited till they were all comfortably settled. Then he would come along, saying 'Kerkle, kerkle!' and trampling over the feathery mass as light-heartedly as Aphrodite when she rose from the sea and trod the foamy waves on that first morning when the world was made. Then he would

plunge down into the middle of them, seeking the depths like a sponge-diver, wriggling his body until it was completely buried, the others meanwhile uttering comfortable protests, but showing no resentment whatever at his conduct. Cleomenes always experienced a thrill of ecstasy in watching this performance. Somehow it reminded him of the story about Leda, the mother of the sun-god, who was wooed by Zeus himself in the form of a swan: though Cleomenes never succeeded properly in working out the connection of ideas. He just knew vaguely that it was based on feathers. But he found it exceedingly difficult to tear himself away from his birds. Sometimes, when he had really finished with them and shut them up for the night, he could not resist taking a lantern and going again to have another peep at them all huddled up together. Then they would cheep and twitter gently, not alarmed, because they knew him for a friend, here and there lifting a head as if to enquire for what cause they had been disturbed.

Cleomenes often wondered if the gods watched over mortals as tenderly as he watched over his fowls.

Socrates was talking about the dramatists now, though how he had got on to that subject Cleomenes could not imagine. There was a play all about birds by Aristophanes. People said it was a clever political satire, and so it might have been, but to Cleomenes it was full of the whirr of soft feathers, the flutter of wings and the sound of bird voices. There was another stage scene he liked very much too—that one in the *Ion* of Euripides, where the boy-acolyte feeds the wild birds on the terrace of Apollo's shrine at Delphi. Watching the play, Cleomenes could feel the touch of their feet on his own wrist, the soft brush of their feathers and their beaks gently pecking in the palm of his hand. He wondered if Euripides knew it too. Had Euripides ever kept poultry? What was that joke about the mother of Euripides selling lettuce at a stall in the market? . . .

He suddenly became aware that everyone was staring at him and he heard Socrates saying in his persuasive voice, 'So you admit then after all that these fowls do not in fact belong to you?'

'I admit nothing of the sort!'

'But, your pardon, my friend! You have walked with me step by step every inch of the argument. Our friends here will bear me witness that you agreed to all I said.' Cries of 'Yes, yes! That's right! You admitted it yourself, Cleomenes! You can't go back on it now!'



'I never said these fowls were not mine!'

'You admitted that none of us could rightly call anything his own.'

'I'll admit that none of us can call his soul his own with *you* about!' Cleomenes shouted furiously.

There was a general laugh at this, and they all got up to go. Socrates remarked genially that if the fowls no longer belonged to Cleomenes, they didn't belong to anyone else either, so they had better remain in the care of the man who understood them. Cleomenes told himself that it was only a silly argument and not meant to be taken seriously, but when they had gone he took a lantern and stayed a long time looking at his fowls. Apollo said: 'Kerkle, kerkle!' and the hens reproached him lovingly for disturbing them. In their gentle voices he found more consolation than in any philosophy.

Six months afterwards Socrates was put on his trial for corrupting the youth of the city and for not believing in the established religion. It was a serious charge and the prescribed penalty was death, but of course everyone felt sure it would be commuted to banishment, including Cleomenes who voted with the majority in declaring Socrates guilty. Not that they desired his death, but they were determined to remove his evil influence from the city. There were other places, less right-minded than Athens, where freethinkers were tolerated. But who could have anticipated the old man's craziness? Not only did he steadfastly refuse to go into exile, but when asked to suggest some alternative punishment he said he thought he had deserved to be maintained for the rest of his life at the public expense. After that, Cleomenes asserted, he had only himself to thank if they condemned him to death. It showed what the man was—such unseemly levity at so solemn a moment. Actually making fun of the majesty of the law!

Cleomenes spoke with some vehemence, raising his voice, because he knew that Gorgo was listening. She was supposed to be in bed, but her father knew quite well she was sitting behind the window curtain, listening to every word he said. He had not forgotten the look she gave him when he came home from the Assembly with the news that Socrates was to die. 'And you voted him guilty?' she said, and ever since she did not seem to have looked at him at all. He began to wish that he had spanked her more often as a child and not let her have her own way so much with the fowls. Now she had suddenly shot up into a tall graceful girl of fourteen. Very soon he would have to be finding her a husband, and young men

were scarce ever since the War. Perhaps he would have to sell some of his prize birds to augment her dowry. A gloomy prospect. Then it struck him that he might be able to marry her to someone who was fond of poultry himself and would take some of the birds in part payment of the dowry. The birds would be a consolation to her too, if she felt lonely in her new home. . . . But how one's thoughts ran on! She had not been so interested in the poultry just lately, he remembered. This business of Socrates had occupied their minds to the exclusion of all else.

'Of course,' he went on explaining with unnecessary vehemence to an assenting circle of listeners, 'what Socrates did or didn't believe about the gods no one will ever know. He simply wouldn't say straight out, and that in itself shows that he hadn't much use for them, or he'd have said so. But what I say is, if you take the gods away, what *have* you got left? Why, nothing! What would the Parthenon be, without the goddess Athene? A mere empty shell for the winds to whistle through! And which of you would want to win prizes at the Olympic Games if you couldn't come back and lay your trophies on her altar? What would the grape harvest be without the festivals of Dionysus? And where's the fun in selling an old hen for double its value, if you can't feel Hermes standing beside you invisible in the market-place enjoying the joke? Besides, what is going to happen to banking and credit and finance generally? If you deny the gods, you destroy the sanctity of their temples. That means that when the next war breaks out (and that won't be long!) there won't be a safe place in all Greece. No sanctuary for life, no safety for possessions. And if a temple can be sacked just as a city can be plundered, the temple banks will have to suspend payment. They won't be able to issue any more loans—do you realise what that means? Yes, the great treasuries will be broken up, those that for centuries have gone on lending money at a steady six per cent interest in the midst of incessant civil wars and turmoils, simply because war risks had no meaning for them, since no one has ever dared to raise a hand against the houses of the gods.—Take away the gods, I say, and you knock the bottom out of civilisation, you plunge us all back again into the age of barbarism! You not only empty the heavens, you scatter the earth with ruins!'

Cleomenes paused, pleased with his own eloquence, and tossed a couple of obols over the fence to an old beggar woman in the road. She heard the clink of the coins as they fell in the dust, but she was

almost blind and could not find them. Cleomenes, obeying a sudden impulse, rushed out and picked them up for her. He dropped them into her dirty claw with an apology for his rudeness in having thrown them. She gaped at him as she clutched the money, as well she might, for everyone knew she was only old Clytie who sat on the steps in the agora all day, worrying passers-by for alms, a woman whose past would certainly not bear investigation. But it had occurred to Cleomenes that the gods often visited the earth in mortal guise. Even so had white-armed Hera appeared to Jason, when he lost his sandal carrying her across the stream. And, anyhow, strangers and beggars came from Zeus! It brought him some comfort, having condemned to death a fellow-citizen, to shower apologies upon a beggar, and he hoped that Gorgo was suitably impressed.

She showed no signs of it. He found it very hard to restrain himself from punishing her during the twenty-odd days that elapsed between the trial and the execution of Socrates. But at last it was over, and with something like a sigh of relief Cleomenes heard the news of the philosopher's death. He drank the hemlock at sundown, it seemed, and died a few minutes later. There were little groups and knots of people standing about the streets till all hours that night telling each other details—his unflinching courage, his gentle raillery of his heart-broken disciples, his kindness and courtesy to his gaoler and to the doctor who administered the poison; his last wonderful inspired discourse on the immortality of the soul—all about the happy gods and the joys of heaven. What if he had been right about the gods after all? But what stuck in Cleomenes' mind was his last request, the last few words he uttered, even as he felt the poison gathering round the heart, dead already from the waist downwards:

'Crito,' he said, 'we owe a cock to Æsculapius. Pay it, therefore, and do not neglect it.'

'It shall be done,' said Crito, 'but consider whether you have anything else to say.'

To this question he gave no reply.

A cock to Æsculapius! The prescribed sacrifice for recovery from an illness—and Socrates had never known a day's illness in his life. He could not then have been referring to some outstanding debt. Why sacrifice to the god of medicine and of healing at the very moment when he felt the icy hand of death? Did he mean that already the dying was over, and the sickness of death had

passed away? Or could he have meant that life was itself an illness, and death was merely the recovery? A disturbing thought! Cleomenes looked at the dark and empty skies and strode away down the street. He would have liked to repair to a tavern and drink himself into oblivion, but there was something to be done first. To-morrow night the tavern, perhaps. Not to-night. He took a lantern and went into the fowl-house. The hens with their soft voices reproached him lovingly, and Apollo said 'Kerkle-kerkle!' as strong hands dragged him from the perch where he snuggled close and warm beside his favourite wife. Cleomenes carried him outside and shut the fowl-house door. He looked again at the empty leaden skies and thought with anguish of the hours that must elapse before the sun rose again and he could go round to Crito's house with his offering. Suppose the sun should never rise again! Suppose the great sun-god, missing the brave greeting of the bird who bore his name, should refuse to set his coursers on their daily race across the sky? No more sunlight, no more crowds in the agora, neighbours to gossip with, bargains to drive. If life was a disease, then Cleomenes wanted to have it badly! But no Greek, he felt, least of all Socrates, could ever hold such a doctrine. Still, whatever it might mean, this curious last wish of the philosopher, Æsculapius should have his cock. Cleomenes pulled himself together and gave Apollo's neck another twist to make quite sure. He was a fool, he told himself, to stand here alone in the darkness, thinking thoughts that could only drive him mad. Companionship, that was what he wanted! He would go into the house, light all the lamps, wake someone up and make them talk to him.

Raising his lantern, he sought his way out of the reeded enclosure. As he pushed back the door, the light fell on Gorgo, standing there in her nightgown with a shawl round her, her eyes as usual not on him, but on the lifeless bundle of feathers hanging from his fingers.

'Why aren't you in bed?' he blustered. Then to his surprise he found himself seeking justification. 'This is Apollo, this is. He's going to Æsculapius in the morning. Socrates—er—when he died—there was something said about a cock owing to Æsculapius. It would have to be a bird without blemish, and there isn't a finer cock in all Athens, so I thought—well—'

Gorgo raised her eyes then and looked straight at him, and he thought he detected a hint of laughter behind their accusing stare.

'I should think so too,' she remarked primly, standing aside to let him pass. 'The very least you can do under the circumstances.'

## 'I MORTI.'

BY LUCY CRUMP.

ONE winter morning I saw from my window Assunta returning from Mass before the sun had begun to fleck with colour the clouds floating lightly above the mountains. I wondered to see her on a weekday. Sundays sometimes, special *fiesta* days always, but to-day was not even dedicated to a 'saint much in use.' If it had been St. Anthony of Padua! St. Anthony who is, beyond all others, helpful in the everyday things of life; a journey, a lost thimble, an examination to pass; anybody might go on St. Anthony's day. But that is in June and this was a chill December morning that had made Assunta twist her black woollen scarf over her head and round her plump shoulders. Later she gave me the explanation.

'To-day is the day of "my dead," and I have been to church to have a Mass said for them. It is ten years ago since my mother died and forty years since my father's death, but as there is only one day's difference in the day of the month I have one Mass said for them both. I gave fifteen lire to the priest. My mother never paid more than ten, but then that was in Umbria, my home. Liguria is different. You know what a language it is here!'

Assunta speaks pure Italian and is proud of it. Tears stood in her eyes as she spoke of her long-dead parents, for at the thought of the dead, whether her own or another's, her tears come easily and are as easily wiped. Yet they arise from a very real sensibility.

'Is it true, Signora, that in England no masses are said for your dead, really true?'

Her question, and her puzzled look of pain at my answer, was one more manifestation of that unbridgeable gulf that lies between us and these Latin people. Masses may, indeed, be said in England for those dead in the Catholic faith, but it is not the Mass that makes the gulf. It is a sentiment older than the religion which clothes the ceremonies for the dead, and would fain direct the sentiment; something which links these people with a civilisation of far remote ages. In England, perhaps happily, we have no such remote past to cloud our clear sense of our own individuality.

Our dead may live in our memories undyingly ; we may think of them with poignant grief, with tenderness, resignation ; we may bury them in forgetfulness, indifference. But our grief and our forgetfulness are personal to ourselves. Many among us, when confronted with death, find a fresh vividness in the faith of the 'communion of saints' ; many let their sad hearts rest with those who 'rest in the Lord' and feel no doubt of their still-living presence ; but still is our grief personal to ourselves and no less personal to those we mourn. We have no sense of a dead *family*, claiming its dues of observance, no wish to join in a general commemoration of those we have lost. We weep reluctantly because we must, and we weep alone. Here, as I watch with my remote and alien eyes, I feel the whole attitude towards death is different to that of England. Is not the difference suggested by our different names for the same day ; with us All Souls' Day ; with them the Day of the Dead. Suggested still more startlingly by our English unawareness of the day in its yearly recurrence, in contrast with its universal observance in this Latin world.

Nor is the observance of the dead restricted to one day of the year when all join in a common commemoration. Sunday after Sunday the steep path which leads to the cemetery is trodden by little parties, not necessarily sad, probably chatting cheerfully enough about the small happenings of life, but all bent on laying a handful of flowers on the graves lying so closely together within the high cemetery walls. A new grave may, perchance, have been added when a Sunday comes round, but the old are not the less cared for ; grandparents are as much 'our dead' as parents and children ; all are part of that great unseen community of dead ancestors encompassing their living descendants.

In our town of small happenings a funeral is an event. Some may pass from that parish church to the cemetery on the hill little noticed, but some claim the attention of the whole town.

Now and again I chance on such funerals as I cross the ilex-shaded square ; a long, long line of people, of banners, of crosses held aloft, of tapers, and the low drone of the chant, now rising, now broken into silence. Two such I lately watched. One was that of a noted lady in our town and half the population seemed included in the procession. First came the little girls from the Orphanage, black and white check frocks and black capes, their Sunday-best dresses. Two gentle-faced nuns walked by them and kept the quavering childish voices in such tune as they could.



The Orphanage would be paid fifty lire for the services of the twenty little maids ; a large price truly, but the town had lately decided that it was much prettier to have their dead ' fetched ' by nice little children than by the old-fashioned Fraternities. I often wondered what the orphans thought of the fashion, but after all a prominent place in one's Sunday frock and an extra walk instead of school may have yielded reasonable enjoyment. After the children came the cross-bearers and mourners carrying wreaths and emblems in palm leaves and flowers, some so big and heavy that it took two men to each ; others, if less weighty, yet almost hiding their bearers as they passed along. Then followed the monks from the convent, the priest, the coffin, the chief mourners, and after them a seemingly never-ending line of men and women winding down from the church on its terrace, and across the square and so on till the last straggler had vanished round the bend in the road. The little voices of the children and the lower chaunt of the priest was quite inaudible to those at the end of the procession. And so it wound its way through the narrow cobbled street, under the half-broken arch of the town gateway and so to the foot of the long climb to the cemetery. There those who followed merely out of respect turned back to their work, while those more intimately connected with the dead woman followed the coffin to the grave.

Assunta watched it all from the balcony, wiping her eyes from time to time and quietly enjoying the emotional thrill.

The following day I watched another funeral in strange contrast to the first. No little orphans took part in this one. Instead, a somewhat rambling company of men in long white smocks over their working clothes, girdled with rope and with white cloths twisted round their heads, plodded along behind their cross-bearer. The long heavy candles they carried flickered in the wind, went out and were relighted one from another. The curious cadence of their rough voices droned monotonously. The procession that followed was almost entirely of men and seemed to be as numerous as the previous one, but since this was the funeral of a man the male mourners walked first and the women followed. All, except the near relations, were in working clothes with heavy boots and rough worn hands, a strong bronzed set of men and women. The town, unlike its usual habit, seemed quite indifferent. Here and there a man raised his hat and the women came to the shop doors to cast a glance up and down the street at the long procession slowly passing.

'Whose funeral is it?' I asked.

'Oh, a peasant's; an old man, rich enough. *They* never want for food.'

The answer was given slightly, for there is no love between town and country. Moreover, the old man being borne through their midst might have been rich in vineyards and olives, in cows and pigs, but there was no elegance about his funeral such as the town folk loved. So they merely glanced, raised their caps and turned away to their own affairs.

Mariana, on her balcony, hardly stayed a minute to watch the show.

'You know what those peasants are,' she said to me, as she stepped back into the room. "'Clumsy feet, nimble wits," as the saying is. *That* one always sold his wood in a rainy week, you may be sure. Why? Why, of course, it weighs heavier wet than dry. Let them alone for knowing all the tricks.'

But on All Souls' Day these small differences are merged in a common memory of 'i morti,' not only the dead of this or that person, of townsman or countryman, but the unforgettable company, the dead of all. There are few indeed who pay no reverence to the day. In the remoter villages, and maybe sometimes in our more sophisticated little town, a bed is prepared and food and drink set out ready for those ancestral ghosts who may, perchance, return across the threshold on this one night of all the year. But whether or no such a custom, so deep-rooted in a long-past civilisation, is followed, at least in every house the photographs of lost relatives are put on the table, flowers and tapers are set and many are the tears shed over them; and, indeed, I believe a pleasure is found in tears which is denied to us of a northern race. I remember I once heard an English mistress ask her *donna* if she would like to spend All Souls' Day at home.

'Many, many thanks,' came the quick reply, 'but I'd rather not. Grandmamma will sit all afternoon by her photographs and she'll cry, and cry, and cry. It's melancholy, but of course it is all right for *her*. *She* likes it, she does it every year, but . . .' Giulia was young and had not many dead to weep over, so she stayed busy in her kitchen and left Grandmamma to weep alone, rightly convinced that the old lady was happy in her own way.

In the market garden just outside the now half-ruined town gate, Giuseppe and Caterina have chrysanthemums enough and to spare for all the graves in the cemetery: flowers of the dead which

only 'foreigners' use for any other purpose than decking a grave. Throughout All Saints' Day the cemetery has been full of women and children. Here a wreath has been laid, there flowers have been stuck into the earth in quaint patterns; in the case of the wealthier tombs, marble busts and columns have been elaborately festooned. Everywhere little lamps have been set, and, when night fell, when the heavy gates of the cemetery were closed and all the crowd gone home, the lights twinkled, the flowers gave out their aromatic smell and only the dead knew.

The townsfolk needed to have gone to bed early on All Saints' Day, for next morning the deep bell of the parish church rang out at half-past four. The smaller bells took up the chime and for a few minutes all the air clanged with their sound. The town was all astir before they ceased; by five o'clock, when the one big bell began again, a thin stream of people went quietly through the dark, children holding on to their mothers, old people not left behind, men as well as women, all on their way to the Mass for 'i morti' the common commemoration of mourning. I followed the straggling crowd. A keen wind blew from the mountain ridge, stars glittered in the deep night sky, the bell rang out above us with its musical clang; those who walked before and behind me went silently up the dark of the winding street, across the starlit square and up the long flight of steps to the church. Ceaselessly the little doors, right and left inside the porch, swung open and noiselessly fell to as the worshippers passed out of the night, so cold and still, into the church. I passed in with the rest. Already the church, as yet but dimly lighted, for the Mass would not begin for yet half an hour, was half-full. In the centre of the nave a catafalque had been raised, heavily draped in black and surrounded by tall candles not yet alight, a reminder of the obsequies of all, the common funeral of rich and poor, of those recently dead and of those dead in the long past alike. The scene was sombre and strangely quiet. Men and women silently took their chairs from the fast-diminishing stacks on either side of the door, and placed them in aisles or nave as they liked, but the children gathered in small family parties by the side altars. Many were seated along the altar steps with the long kneeling-stool in front of them, while the bigger children brought chairs to the other side and sat with their backs to the church. For the elders, kneeling in the nave, the morning might be full of sad and solemn thoughts; for the children All Souls' Mass was a treat. There they sat with their toes tucked in under

the benches, each with his taper before him. And now, as the elders trooped in silently, the children were happily busy dropping little pools of wax on the benches before them and fixing their tapers firmly in. How the little candles twinkled and guttered. Perhaps they might be lighted in sad commemoration, but all the same what fun they were. Anna's candle fell over, but Anna was only five and a silly; Fulvio dived after it and after a bit fixed it up again. Luigi collected all the gutterings he could, twisted them in bird shapes in his warm little hands and put them in flights along the bench. Giorgio came late, couldn't see where his family was gathered, started off towards the altar to San Sebastiano and then, standing on tiptoe, found that his own patron saint had taken charge of them on the far side of the church. Deftly he worked his way between the kneeling men and women and soon his candle was added to the rest. Children in these churches rarely disturb the worshippers, perhaps because the worship does not disturb them. There is no crime in movement, nothing irreverent in lighting your taper on All Souls' Day, or waving your palm branch on Palm Sunday, and yet both are fun. When the many altar lights and the great candles round the bier were lighted the children paused; when the altar bell sounded and all knelt the children were very still. If they chattered together at other moments it was too softly to disturb the congregation. Only once in the long two hours' service was heard a small shrill voice across the aisle, once when Anna's and Luigi's tapers burnt so close one to the other that they flared in a common and lovely flame.

The service ended in a long chaunt sung by all in a low plaintive cadence. Verse after verse it went on rising and falling, now all singing, now only a few. I could not hear the words and when I later asked Mariana what it was she replied, 'I do not know. They do not sing it in my country.'

Assunta has lived for thirty years in this one little town, but she still retains her Umbrian birthright and does not know the hymns sung by the women of Liguria.

At last all was over; the lights were extinguished, the great west door was flung wide open and the light of morning flooded in. The worshippers, now chatting quietly together, formed an unbroken procession after the priest, and went their way through the now-awakened town to say their last prayers by the graves of their dead.

*'AND SO YOU SIT, THINKING——'*

ON a low chair you sit, elbows on knees  
 And chin down in your hands, thinking ; often,  
 There in your corner room, with books all round  
 And little space, and flowers here and there,  
 And Botticelli's Holy Family  
 Sharing the place with you perpetually ;  
 And that strange girl framed in luminous blue  
 Of evening sky, buttressed with nightshade trunks  
 Of peaceful trees, portraying womanhood  
 More truly than Leonardo's smiling lady.

And from your window  
 Castle and city rise against the sky  
 Of morning, noon and evening : and at night  
 Mote-like, distinct and solitary lights  
 Signal a town of homes and busy streets.  
 And wide from window to horizon flung,  
 With sun or moon or stars or mist, the sky  
 Stretches to fold the world. How your thoughts  
 Go round the world often like the sky  
 Enfolding it in mystery and God !  
 Galahad would have found your room of peace  
 A place of preparation for the Grail.  
 The room is small, you say, and difficult  
 To sit in, window, fire-place, chairs and desk,  
 Ill-sorted in a cave of books : but you  
 Are wont to sit, chin down in your hands,  
 On that low chair, thinking.

I know your thoughts  
 Dimly. In timeless moments given of grace,  
 They soar like shadowy birds into my ken,  
 That passing draw my gaze beyond itself,  
 To a world inhabited by human souls  
 Seen in the light of prayer, a world of souls  
 Turning as ignorant children to their God,  
 Unconsciously, instinctively, now sure

Of love, now startled by the Parent life  
 And size and power, now testing Love by signs  
 And trifles and mistaking it for wrath.  
 They come, as Eastern dreamers say men come,  
 As picture-thoughts, as figures in a vision  
 They drift into existence, feel and laugh  
 Desire and sorrow here, and vanish hence  
 In crowds and shifting whirlpools of shades  
 Along the phantom tapestries of God.  
 Till on an instant revelation breaks  
 And God Himself has grasped you in a thought.  
 Poised you are caught and held, as the great sun  
 Holds in his dazzling bosom all the beams  
 That lighten all the worlds, so everything  
 Arrested in essential life awaits  
 Its baptism of fresh significance,  
 The healing of its broken birth in time,  
 Of severance in self.

The suffering world,  
 The sacramental world communicant  
 Is gathered to the parent-heart of God.

How may a woman patience-trained in pain,  
 Strung to the finger-play of daily change,  
 With daughters of her care in every land  
 And fellowship with ardent lives, and souls  
 That dwell beyond the dusty gate of death,  
 How may she fail to feel the thorny prick  
 Of common things a crown? She may not fail  
 To see on every childish face the mark  
 Of Mary's child, in every simple act  
 An opportunity to manifest  
 Grace that reveals itself in breaking bread.  
 She may not fail to bear upon herself  
 From head to foot, from hand across to hand,  
 The consecrated Cross invisible.  
 And so you sit, thinking: sending your thoughts  
 As rays from the eternal heart of love  
 To strike the infinitesimal with light  
 Until its marvellous intricacy shines  
 In form and colour an artist's handiwork,



A petal-winged creation, beckoning  
The travel-weary feet to fresh pursuit.

Once I stept

Unwarily within your room at noon,  
And stole away dreading lest you should know  
That anyone had seen you kneeling there :  
Since when I guess dimly your way of thought,  
And how your room of peace is vigil-kept  
A place of preparation for the Grail.

M. R. BROWNLIE.

*IN MEMORIAM, R.L.S.*

*DIED IN SAMOA, DECEMBER 3, 1894.*

SLEEP on, brave heart ; by other, alien mountains  
You have found peace, but all the hills of home  
Cry you good night, and all their winds and fountains  
Whisper to you, across the southern foam.

Eternal summer breathes along those beaches,  
Unvarying, steady, sighing through the palm.  
The breaker's thunder, where the reef out-reaches,  
Peals faint on the lagoon's unrippled calm.

Day-long, in that blue close of lucent ocean,  
The glittering fishes cruise and drift and dream  
Among the salt sea-foliage of no motion,  
Where swings no surge, no moon-drawn waters stream.

And when, as a flower flung, day circling over  
Falls on the cool green leaf of evening sky,  
Stars of the South, like larks of the Highland clover,  
Send soft and silver greeting where you lie.

DUDLEY G. DAVIES.

## HARK BACK! IV.

## THE HIGHVELDT HUSSARS.

BY WILFRID JELF.

[On October 17, just after the November issue of CORNHILL had gone to press, Wilfrid Wykeham Jelf passed away, aged 53, to the infinite grief of his friends. He had been terribly gassed in the War; he gave his life for his country as surely as though he had fallen in the trenches. Week by week, month by month, year by year, uncomplaining, patient, and valorous, he fought his last drawn-out battle—it is ended now. It is a happiness to know that to those closing months the acceptance of his splendid series of adventurous experience brought for him a great peace. 'Words fail to convey my pride and gratification,' he wrote on receiving the September issue, 'in finding myself in such distinguished company in the pages of our premier monthly publication. I am a proud man indeed.' It had always been his dream and now it is being most nobly realised. Readers will rejoice to learn that four further episodes of stirring life, taking the story of his soldiering to St. Quentin at the end of August, 1914, have been written and passed by him for publication. At my request he was engaged on a ninth, so as to complete the series by an episode contrasting the Old Army and the New, when Death stayed his hand. So closes one of those lives of chivalry, strength and courage upon which perennially, in peace as in war, the fame of the British soldier sits enthroned.—G.]

THOSE of us who 'lay with' the Highveldt Hussars were seldom dull. We alone enjoyed the privilege of hearing something about their doings, though any information cheerfully vouchsafed to us always stopped a long way short of confidences. As the only representatives of the Regular Army we were branded as 'Imperial' and subject to the contagion of Queen's Regulations and officialdom generally. As for the despatches solemnly forwarded to Pretoria at decent intervals, these merely narrated as much as was considered good for the Great General Staff and no more. Mention, for instance, of those mysterious self-imposed expeditions into 'The Blue' was studiously avoided. The Commanding Officer saw to that.

Up in his Headquarters Colonel Johann Colenbrander stroked his beard as he watched those officers who had dropped in after dinner stewing the punch-bowl in vessels which unashamedly denoted ecclesiastical plunder. He feared neither God nor man, this hardy old veteran of the Bushveldt; and his regiment of Irregular Cavalry, enlisted from every corner of the world, followed him with a blind devotion which brought out the best as well as the worst in a hand-to-mouth life bristling with adventure.

The ecclesiastical vessel had passed round the table twice when the National Scout Intelligence Agent quietly entered the room and slipped round to the Colonel's chair. There he leaned over his shoulder and whispered for some considerable time into his ear. The old warrior listened to his story with interest. As the narrative proceeded a smile of satisfaction slowly spread over his face and he started drumming idly with his fingers on the table. Then a nod of dismissal ended the interview and the Agent left the room.

Now Colenbrander's fingers never drummed without an immediate sequel, and a long silence fell on the expectant company.

Wilson, second-in-command, sitting next to him, finally poked him with his elbow. 'Come on, Johann! Let's have it.'

They did it like that in the Highveldts.

'Well, boys!' cried the Colonel, 'this is all there is to it. The Regiment will saddle up and ride west in an hour. Supplies for ten days!'

The room was cleared in less than a minute. Outside there wasn't an officer who didn't swear at the darkness of the night, and the language of the Highveldts was never a pretty thing. But they had received all the orders they were likely to get and had to make the best of it. The Regiment had never failed Johann yet, and when morning came they had vanished into thin air! We 'Imperials' were quite used to it.

But nine days later a peculiarly vital piece of native intelligence reached the base camp at Pietersburg, purporting to have located the position at the moment of Beyers, Commandant of all the northern Boer forces, and of course the Highveldt Hussars were absent without leave on their unknown objective. No one had the remotest idea where they had gone or when they might be expected back. But their luck was in, for a distant column of dust travelling rapidly over Zand River Poort indicated that they were on their way back to Railhead at the conclusion of

their picnic that very afternoon. They were in camp by four o'clock.

The past ten days had been most profitably spent, so it was subsequently whispered in camp, though the profit accruing would appear perhaps to have borne more private than public interest. Canteen gossip at night added some remarkable sidelights. The Regiment had originally gone off at two hours' notice, it seemed, and had ridden one hundred miles due west into the high veldt on receipt of certain information (not communicated to the powers that be). Under secret instructions from De la Rey, that unconquerable Boer spirit of the west, a small commando of Transvaalers had been detached to round up all those herds of stock which by this time had become scattered in confusion all over the province, and collect them secretly into the most remote north-western corner of the state. There they were to remain in hiding until the end of hostilities should enable those deserving burghers who still remained in the field to take their reward and re-stock their farms from this valuable supply. The total head of cattle involved, so the native reports had declared, ran into thousands.

Now here was a heaven-sent proposition for Hussars of the Highveldt of a type very dear to their heart: and the hundred miles had been put behind them in two nights and a day. Day-break of the second morning had found the small Transvaal commando entirely surprised by the occupation of all vantage-points covering their immense laager, and the surrender of the Boer force followed immediately.

So far, so good. The important part of the operation was still to come in the disposal of the valuable herds. Everything worked out according to plan. Such beasts as were not worth keeping were carefully picked out for the count in the official bag and were sent back to the line with the thirty-odd prisoners under escort of one squadron while a glowing account of their capture was prepared for Pretoria. The remainder, comprising the whole of the healthy stock, running into several thousand head, were driven off in a north-westerly direction and ultimately hurried across the Limpopo River into Rhodesia. The fact that the farms on which they were ultimately allowed to come to rest happened to be the property of—well, persons closely connected with our good Hussars merely served to cap a very interesting adventure with a remarkable coincidence.

But there is an end to all good things and now, after ten days

in the hush-hush veldt, the Regiment had returned to the line just in time to find a new task of a novel character awaiting it.

Two of our most reliable native runners had made an interesting discovery. They professed, indeed, to be in a position to lead a party that very night to a lonely farm-house twenty miles to the north-east in which the great Boer Commandant was due to spend the evening, if not the night, in the company of Vrouw Van K—, the wife of a farmer still out on commando. Such was the somewhat gossipy but romantic tale which was unfolded under the searching enquiry of Colenbrander. There wasn't much which the average Kaffir could keep back or embroider in the presence of that hardy old inquisitor, and he was satisfied of the credibility of the startling information.

'It's a one-troop affair this,' he said to the Adjutant. 'If we send more we shall only spoil the whole show and the one important thing is not to draw attention. Send Baxter to me. If he can bring back Beyers alive, he's a made man.'

So Baxter's troop saddled up at dusk and Colenbrander strolled down to the horse-lines to see the party off.

'Be there about ten o'clock,' he growled as the officer slipped into the saddle; 'he should be getting into the unguarded stages about then—that is, if the woman has any decent wine in the house to bottle him with at dinner, which in these hard times I rather doubt. Now, mark you! you've got a slim one to deal with who's a darned long sight smarter than you are. He'll run rings round you if you don't block every possible chance of escape. Keep him enjoying milady's charms until you've got him properly netted,' he chuckled; 'and then bring him back alive to me. It'll be worth your while, sonny. Off you go!'

And they pushed off into the night.

The Kaffir runner knew every square inch of the country and led the party with unerring accuracy through the early dark hours, never once from first to last bringing them into contact with a living soul. Silence was the order of the night and the lighting of pipes and cigarettes, that fruitful, nay, dead certain cause of night failure, had been absolutely prohibited. For once in a way the men were acting on instructions. Here was a trapping expedition after their heart and they were pitting their skill against that of a man of experience who was not likely to be risking a

'night off' without the adoption of every possible precaution against surprise in listening and observation posts.

The farm lay a long way off the worn track and after sixteen miles the troop struck out into the veldt and threaded its way for the next four with some difficulty through the bush. Later this opened out again until at the foot of a small kopje the guide halted and Baxter dismounted his men. He left his horse-holders here while the remainder followed him up the hill on foot and halted short of the top. From this point he went forward to make his reconnaissance, taking with him only the Kaffir boy and two scouts, and disappeared down the far side.

He hadn't far to go. Two hundred yards down he found the range of buildings. They stood under a clump of trees protected by rising ground from three sides and open to the fourth or far side where the ground fell gradually away to a lower plain of veldt below. Down this slope ran the farm tracks following roughly the bank of a donga which formed the dam supplying the farm with its water. The outbuildings and barns were modest and compact, and, in fact, the whole thing was a simple proposition for anyone, money for nothing to a troop of Highveldt Hussars!

In five minutes Baxter was back with his men giving his final instructions, and in twenty the place was surrounded, the net drawn in. Nothing had been forgotten and nothing remained but the giving of the signal on the whistle to carry the house with a rush. Meanwhile signs of life were clearly audible within.

The night was profoundly dark, and when Baxter had found his way back to the position from which he intended to direct operations, he found that in his absence a new situation had arisen which amazed him. A small window and shutter had been flung open in the house close to his vantage-point and he found himself looking straight into a room of the nature of a farm parlour. It was brightly, not to say recklessly, illuminated. Opposite to him and in the full glare of the lamplight there were two figures: the lady of the house seated at the piano and a man standing beside her ready to turn over the leaves of the music. She was just starting on the opening bars.

There wasn't the shadow of a doubt about it. Baxter had only a dim recollection of a picture from an illustrated London journal to go by, but here—whispering sweet nothings, unguarded, warmed by that rarest of all Boer commodities of the time, an adequate dinner with wine to match, here in the palm of his hand



he held the Commander of all the Northern Boer forces. The whistle went to his lips and at that psychological moment the man started to sing . . . in English, and uncommonly well!!

The more intense the moment of crisis, the more easily deflected from its course by the incongruous trifle. Time and again has a life in jeopardy been saved by this fortuitous dispensation of mercy. The song selected was that famous old favourite, 'The Diver,' and her ladyship's accompaniment was worthy both of the song and of the occasion. An irresistible curiosity to hear the song seized Baxter and he dwelt with the whistle still at his lip.

And he kept twenty-five Hussars of the Highveldt dwelling with him!

'In the caverns deep of the ocean cold,  
The Diver is seeking a treasure of gold;  
Risking his life for the spoils of a wreck,  
Taking rich gems from the dead on her deck,  
And fearful such sights to the Diver must be,  
Walking alone, walking alone—  
Walking alone in the depths of the sea.  
He is now on the surface, he's gasping for breath,  
So pale that he wants but the stillness of death;  
—'

For many a long day, and certainly for many a sleepless night, Baxter lived the next few moments over and again. Exactly what happened and how, he asked himself till he was sick and tired of the question, always without relief. The fact remained. In the middle of the second verse and with a sudden inspiration, the pianist stopped dead, looked up quickly at the great man, and said something to him. In an instant the lamp and both candles had been extinguished and the room was in total darkness.

Then, and not till then, did Baxter blow his whistle. The next moment every known exit from the house was blocked. He himself rushed the corner with his appointed party for the stoep and the front door, raced down the passage to the parlour, and flung open the door. The room was still in darkness and the harmonies of the accompaniment to the song were still to be heard through all the din and confusion. But there was no voice and there was no man. When the lamp had been re-lit there was only their hostess unconcernedly sitting at the piano, playing the song right out to the end while they searched every corner of the room.

Then she swung round on the music stool and smiled at them quite charmingly.

'You like your English song, gentlemen?' she asked, speaking in Dutch. 'It is a very good song, but you do not seem to have time to listen to it. What a pity!'

She showed them all over the house. There wasn't a corner, a cupboard, a floor board, that wasn't minutely scrutinised and examined. The roof, the cellar, the kitchen in which one ancient Kaffir servant was found washing up after the night's feast—nothing! Absolutely nothing. All drawn blank without a trace. The outbuildings yielded no more profitable results; and, as day broke, patrols rode out on every point of the compass, ranging for the fugitive on a ten-mile radius.

But at last all shadow of doubt was removed and they knew the worst. One of the reconnoitring parties had come across a Kaffir kraal five miles out east, of which the headman had told them that Commandant Beyers with two attendants who had been waiting overnight with the ponies in the low ground had passed the kraal at one o'clock in the morning riding at his ease on his way to a commando which was known to be awaiting him twenty miles on.

That settled it. The Highveldt Hussars had lost the rubber. There was nothing for it now but to make the best of it and go. As soon as all patrols were in and horses had been well fed on the little produce remaining in the barn (in feeble reprisal for disappointed hope), the troop saddled up and set off for home with the Retreat-from-Moscow-look about them. As Baxter rode past the little parlour window he felt compelled to look in. He was meant to do so, for Vrouw Van K—— was seated at the piano smiling at him as he went by. She happened to be playing Chopin's Funeral March, a subtlety which was not lost on him.

For twenty miles he rode at the head of his troop, lost in conjecture. He had a feeling that he was the only member of the raiding party who probably knew the answer. There was that open window, absurdly small though it was. He had made his final dispositions for rushing the place before it had been opened. Through it the man had probably wriggled and mixed with his own party in the race for the front door!!!

And always the same words kept buzzing in his brain:

'He's a darned long sight smarter than you are and he'll run rings round you. . . .'

Yes, of course. That was exactly what he had done.

### INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE.

ALBERT THOMAS, Director of the I.L.O.,  
and Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the Governing Board,  
have wagged their beards for the last time.

At Petit Saconnex  
the old Office is an inferior Hotel,  
and in the Route de Lausanne  
a new and beardless Director  
looks out vaguely at the lake,  
wondering at his chubby King Hal ease  
if his game of tennis will be interrupted by the Bise.

Dans cette nuit immense  
Qu'allez vous faire si loin d'ici,  
Albert et Arthur ? La parole est à vous.  
There is no second international in death,  
Albert, but only the first international  
of the white-moth dead, who form no groups,  
pass no Conventions, do not tear their beards,  
nor with a sudden flight of the eagle tower,  
where only the heart of the bird in silence speaks  
to the snow-silence of the mountain-peaks.

And, Arthur, Rhadamanthus makes  
no special exemptions for the French,  
even for one who with delicate swift gestures  
can make all judgment seem ridiculous  
save a summing-up in favour of l'esprit Gaulois.  
And the gold colour of Monet, and the misty palette  
of Carrière are scattered, and your mild eyes  
must look where unknown painters mix  
their midnight water-colours by the Styx.

Flush at evening on Mont Blanc seen from the Board-room,  
sound of the cattle-bells in the steep lane outside the garden,  
or the snow beating against the window of the Hotel Belle-vue,  
or against the high balcony on the Rue de Mont Blanc,  
or the mouettes cutting a sword path with the moon to Belle-Rive  
and the Jura guarding the peace of Genève for all the world,  
never again, Albert, never again, Arthur. But instead  
memory, while any of us can still remember,  
of two bons bourgeois, who, on the point of a lance,  
carried the pennant of triumphant France.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

## *ALL PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES.*

BY CLARE SILVA-WHITE.

THREE o'clock in the Palace gardens. A brilliant July sun blazed down on the lawns that generations of gardeners had rolled to a perfection of velvety smoothness. In the distance could be seen the tennis courts and croquet lawns half-hidden behind those huge hedges of lupins and delphiniums which, now in full bloom, made a gallant show. The scent of hundreds of rose-bushes filled the air with heavy sweetness. The droning of fat bumble-bees, as they made their drowsy progress from flower to flower, sounded almost like a lullaby.

The old grey Palace lay sleeping in the sunshine, and high above it, rose the ancient pile of Dilchester Cathedral, its lace-like towers outlined against the perfect background of the blue summer sky.

Across the lawns three peacocks trailed their brilliant plumage, like debutantes at a drawing-room. They were lovely birds, and their presence gave an almost tropical note to the peaceful English garden. Up and down they went, as though unwilling that their beauty should be wasted. And every now and again they would arch their sapphire necks, searching the sky with their little round bead-like eyes, as though seeking excuse to utter those shrill cries that always warned the people of Dilchester when they might expect rain.

Hidden away behind a rose-bush, laden with crimson roses, on a rustic, green-painted seat, an old man in a dark violet-coloured cassock lay peacefully asleep. His beautiful, snow-white head was sunk on his breast, his hands, on one of which gleamed the great sapphire ring of the see of Dilchester, were lightly clasped. Then, suddenly, the Cathedral bell rang out the hour. One, two, three.

The Bishop's eyes opened. He moved a little in his seat. He looked round at his lovely garden, enjoying it while he had the opportunity. Presently he would have to go in, for even his chaplain, good, devoted soul that he was, could not protect him indefinitely, and the calls on his time were endless.

But on one thing that faithful warder of his was firm as iron. No one should disturb the Bishop between two and three in the afternoon. Once quite an important personage had been kept waiting for nearly three-quarters of an hour.

'My dear Princess, I am very sorry, very sorry indeed,' the Bishop had said, 'but to tell the truth, there is just one hour in the day when the Bishop is definitely not his own master, and I am afraid you have been so unfortunate as to time your visit then.'

The Princess had smiled, perhaps not too well pleased. But the Bishop had entertained her so charmingly that she soon forgot all about the time she had been kept waiting.

Presently, as the Bishop sat there, enjoying the beauty of his garden, he heard steps approaching down the path.

'What is it, William?' he asked as his chaplain came up, his face wearing its usual worried expression.

'My Lord, Mr. Whalley, the new chaplain at the Gaol, has called to see you. As a matter of fact, he has been waiting for over half an hour. But, of course, I told him that I could not possibly disturb you until three o'clock.'

'Except on a matter of life and death, my dear William,' said the Bishop, smiling a little.

'Yes, I know, but his visit could scarcely come under that description, although he was very insistent. Worse than the Princess.'

And the chaplain sighed a little, reflecting for the hundredth time that a weakling in any sense of the word, would have been little use as chaplain to the Bishop of Dilchester.

'Never mind. It is nearly ten minutes past three now. Don't keep the poor fellow waiting any longer. Bring him out here to me.'

'Out here?' repeated the chaplain rather dubiously.

'My dear William, do take care before it is too late. You are becoming a perfect slave to convention. Why shouldn't I see Mr. Whalley out here in the garden? What possible harm can there be in it?'

'Very well, my Lord. I will bring him out to you.'

The Rev. William Halifax, domestic chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Dilchester, walked quickly down the garden path, and as the Bishop watched his tall figure disappear behind the lupins, he smiled a little.

The best fellow in the world, dear William. But oh how he did love to wrap him up in cotton-wool, and how easily, even after

living with the Bishop for nearly ten years, was he shocked and stirred to the very bottom of his soul, by every fresh exhibition of episcopal unconventionality.

‘The Rev. Mr. Whalley, my Lord.’

The Bishop looked up with a start, as the shadow of a broad-set, middle-aged, red-faced man, in heavy black clerical broad-cloth, fell across the garden path.

Strangely enough, it was not as though the shadow of the newly appointed chaplain to Her Majesty’s Gaol fell only on that particular part of the garden where the Bishop sat. It seemed to fall also across those radiant emerald lawns, those splendid hedges of lupins and delphiniums, carrying with it the deadly chill of some soul-destroying blight.

The Bishop rose slowly to his feet, and held out his hand.

‘Mr. Whalley, I am glad to meet you.’

‘My Lord, it is kind of you to say so.’

The Bishop looked searchingly into his visitor’s face as he held the warm, rather moist hand for a second in his delicate fingers.

‘You may leave us, William. I will bring Mr. Whalley in to tea in half an hour’s time.’

For a moment the gloom on the heavy face of the visitor seemed to lift, as though the Bishop’s kindly greeting had charmed it away.

But it returned as, at the Bishop’s invitation, he sat down on the seat beside him.

‘My Lord, I hardly like to tell you why I have come to see you.’

‘Supposing you try at any rate,’ said the gentle old voice.

‘Take your time. I promise you that I won’t run away, and my chaplain will not expect us in for tea till four o’clock.’

He smiled encouragingly, but there was no answering smile on his visitor’s face.

‘We have at the Gaol,’ began the Rev. Mr. Whalley, speaking in a low, unhappy voice, ‘a terrible case. It is a young man, a mere boy in fact, who has been convicted of the murder of his sweetheart. He is to be hanged on Monday week.’

Here the speaker paused, his face twitching nervously, his hands locked tight about his knee.

‘I hardly like to go on. I don’t know what you will think of me.’

Once more he paused, and this time the Bishop said gently:

‘You need not say any more, Mr. Whalley. Perhaps I can guess what you are trying to tell me. You are new, I believe, to this kind of work, and you feel that you cannot face the task



of preparing a man who has committed the sin of murder to meet the end which the law has decreed as his fitting punishment.'

'Yes, my Lord, that is what I came here to tell you. To beg of you to forgive, and if possible, to overlook my weakness, and to allow me to ask some older and more experienced parish priest in Dilchester, if he will undertake this task for me. I know I am acting the part of a coward, but I cannot help it. I have fought with myself for days, but I cannot bring myself to face the task. He is so young—only twenty-one—hardly older than my own son—I just feel I cannot do it.'

The Bishop laid his hand for a moment on that of his visitor.

'My dear Whalley, you must not distress yourself. I know exactly how you feel. Say no more about it. I will relieve you of all further responsibility where the poor lad is concerned. I will see to it that a suitable priest, older, perhaps in years and experience than yourself, as you suggest, shall visit him and prepare him for his end. Poor lad, poor lad, my heart ached when I read the case in the paper the other night. So young to have done such a terrible thing, and yet for him, as for all other poor tempted souls, One knelt in agony beneath the trees in another garden. If he can be brought to a state of mind in which he is ready to offer the rest of the short span of his life to his Redeemer, just think, dear friend, how beautiful a thing that would be.'

For a moment the garden was blurred before the chaplain's eyes. He had only been in Dilchester for a very short time, but he felt he knew now why everyone in the old historic city worshipped the Bishop.

But all he said was: 'My Lord, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. You have relieved my mind of a terrible load. I am more grateful to you than I can possibly say.'

'Say no more about it. These moments come to us all. Now, let us go in. My chaplain will be waiting for us.'

As they walked slowly up the garden path, he put his hand inside his companion's arm. The shadow had disappeared now from the garden. Nay, it seemed almost as though it had never been. The lawns gleamed greener than any emerald, the droning hum of the bees could be plainly heard on the still warm air. And across the lawn minced delicately the Bishop's peacocks.

He stopped to allow his companion to admire them, and his eyes kindled at his words of praise. Never had he seen finer birds. Indeed, he doubted if there could be finer ones anywhere.

'The Duke has some wonderful birds at Helenscourt,' said the Bishop in his truthful way.

'I saw them only three days ago when I was passing the Castle. They came quite close to the walls of the Park. But I assure you, my Lord, they could not be compared with these birds.'

The Bishop allowed a gratified smile to steal over his face. If he had a weakness, it was for hearing his beautiful birds praised. Indeed, he was so human a man that his opinion of Mr. Whalley, which because of his sincerity was already a high one, rose even higher.

He pressed his arm cordially, as they continued their way to the Palace. In the big yellow drawing-room, where once a princess had waited for nearly an hour, William was standing beside a tea-table laden with beautiful old silver and china.

His watchful eye noted at once that the prison chaplain, as he walked now into the room, was a very different person to the man who had walked out of it only an hour ago.

He was not so relieved about this as a brother priest might have been expected to be. He knew that in all probability it meant that the visitor had merely shifted his burden on to his host. In other words, he had eased those broad shoulders of his at the expense of those delicate, bowed ones. He knew, none better, that there was no one so ready to take on other people's burdens as the Bishop. It almost seemed as though he welcomed them.

The next morning as the Palace household was gathered about its master at Prayers, the Bishop said very quietly:

'My dear friends, I ask your prayers this morning on behalf of one most grievously afflicted in mind, body and estate.'

The clear beautiful voice fell on the warm, summer air with almost painful distinctness.

The chaplain buried his face in his hands. He was convinced now that it had been as he feared. The Bishop's frailness, so painfully evident that morning, as he rose slowly from his knees, tore at his heart. He noticed the heavy dark shadows beneath the beautiful blue eyes. But when he reached those eyes he stopped, and something like peace returned to his faithful heart. Their expression was so serene, it seemed impossible that anything should be troubling him.

As they took their seats at the breakfast-table, he said hopefully: 'You've nothing on your engagement book this morning, my Lord.'

'No?' said the Bishop quietly, as his butler handed him his coffee.

'I thought, perhaps, as the Duchess was saying only last week when she was here, that it was several months since you had gone over to Helenscourt, that I might order the carriage, say for eleven, and we might drive over there quietly for lunch. You may remember that she told us she expected to be home for luncheon every day this week.'

'My dear William, if you would like to drive over and see the Duchess, take the carriage and go by all means. I am sure she will be delighted to see you. But I cannot accompany you, I fear. I know there are no engagements on my book. But all the same I expect to be busy practically the whole of the morning.'

The chaplain looked across the table with surprised eyes. 'Busy, practically all the morning? But, my Lord, are you sure there is nothing I can do for you?'

'Quite sure, my dear William, quite sure.'

The chaplain's face assumed at once that worried look which the Bishop knew so well.

'My Lord, you look so tired this morning. I know you cannot have had a good night. I felt so glad when I remembered that you had a free morning. I thought that the drive to the Castle on this lovely morning would both rest and refresh you. And now——'

He paused, but the Bishop knew well enough what was in his mind.

'My dear boy, if it is any consolation for you to know that I am not intending to devote the morning to breaking stones, let me hasten to give you that comfort as speedily as possible.'

The chaplain smiled, but it was rather a wry smile. 'There are some things that are equally as tiring as breaking stones, even if they do not involve hard manual labour,' he said a little sadly.

'Never mind, never mind,' said the Bishop soothingly, 'you order the carriage, and go off to Helenscourt. Give the Duchess my love, and tell her that I hope to see both her and the Duke at the Palace next Tuesday week. I think you sent them the formal invitation yesterday morning. Do not worry your head about me. I shall be quite all right. I always am, you know, in spite of all your gloomy prognostications. It's true I didn't have a very good night. In fact, to be perfectly frank, I hardly slept at all. But, William, do you know, as I lay in my bed, turning

first this way, then that, not able to put my worrying thoughts aside, forgetting them until the morning, all of a sudden, a wonderful thing happened. I raised my head, and saw the dawn stealing in through the curtains. In the garden outside my window, I heard a bird beginning to sing its morning hymn of praise. And that made me think of that other Bird, that Dove of Peace, which has always been the earthly symbol of the Third Person in the Most Blessed Trinity. It was as though its holy wings beat for a moment in my restless heart, driving away all disquieting thoughts, dispelling all my foolish fears. The bird outside in the garden had not finished his song when I fell asleep. And when I woke up a few hours later I thought how stupid I had been to have worried and fretted. How little fitted I was to presume to teach others, who stand in such sore need of teaching myself.'

For a moment there was silence, then the chaplain said suddenly: 'But if I go over to Helenscourt, you will be alone for luncheon.'

'And that, of course, would be terrible. I fully agree with you that such a calamity must be avoided at all costs.'

William knew that it was hopeless when the Bishop's eyes danced in that mischievous way.

'Well, my Lord, I do hope you will remember that you are preaching at the special service for the G.F.S. in the Cathedral this afternoon, and will at any rate, rest this afternoon.'

'Rest, rest! My dear William, your mind positively harps on that subject. It seems literally to obsess you. In a few years' time I shall be taking all the rest that even you can desire for me. But give me a little longer, my dear boy. There is still so much for me to do, so many people, who, although I am only a stupid old man, are good enough to bring their troubles for me to share.'

'To share?' The chaplain's laugh was a little bitter. 'If you would even be content to share them, my Lord! But you know that you always want to take the whole burden of other people's troubles upon your shoulders. Dr. Cloudweather was saying to me only the other day—'

'Don't quote that old woman to me again, William, unless you want to make me really angry with you.' The Bishop rose from his chair, and walked across to the window to look at his peacocks.

But the chaplain said firmly: 'I must, my Lord, if only for your own good. He told me that you were doing far too much in this warm weather. That if you persisted, he would not be answerable for the consequences.'

The Bishop turned reluctantly away from the window, smiling that beautiful smile that seemed to light up the whole of his face.

'Never mind what he said, William. Let's both forget him for a little while. Personally, I always find him the easiest person in the world to forget. Believe me, William, that's the way to treat your doctor. Forget that he exists, and he will seldom trouble you, or you will seldom trouble him, which comes to the same thing in the long run. Now, I must go into the chapel for a little while. After that I am going out, and as I shall not see you again until half-past three, let me wish you, my dear William, a very pleasant day, and don't forget to give my affectionate remembrances to the Duchess.'

Nearly half an hour later the Bishop walked slowly down the passage which led from the chapel into the hall, took down his big shovel hat and drew a walking-stick out of the stand. Then, opening the Palace door, he went softly out into the sunshine. The peacocks awaited him on the lawn, but this morning he had little time to give them. As he walked down the gravel drive, the Cathedral clock struck ten, and he quickened his footsteps. He had stayed longer in the chapel than he had intended. But it had been good to be there. Presently he knew it would make all the difference.

Left alone in the study, the Bishop's chaplain paced the floor, his head bent, his hands clasped behind his back. How could he be expected to go off to Helenscourt with a quiet mind, when he hadn't even the vaguest idea where the Bishop had gone, or how he proposed to spend his morning? The Duchess, who adored the Bishop, would be sure to ask him what he was doing. And what could he reply? That he didn't know. A nice sort of chaplain she would think him.

How frail and old he had looked that morning. His beautiful old face had lost so much of its colour lately. Oh well, he would just have to tell Cloudweather that he had done his best, but as usual, to no avail. The doctor would have to speak to him himself. He reflected ruefully that the Bishop, who was the soul of courtesy, would at least refrain from calling him an old woman to his face, whatever he might say behind his back.

Half a mile away, in the county gaol, somebody else was thinking about the Bishop. He too had had a restless night, going over and over again in his mind that conversation that he had had with him in the Palace garden. Wondering, as he twisted

unhappily, now this side and now that, if after all, the old man did not, in the bottom of his heart, despise him for his cowardly evasion of his duty.

Then he remembered the kindly way in which the Bishop had taken his arm, the smile on his face as he had bidden him good-bye. No, people like the Bishop had no room in their hearts for scorn.

As the Rev. Thomas Whalley took his breakfast he wondered very much whom the Bishop would select to take his place with the condemned prisoner. He thought it might probably be the Rev. Mr. Stirling, vicar of St. Alphege's, and one of the oldest of the clergy in Dilchester. Or it might be Chadd, of St. Mary's, or Dempster, of St. Laurence's. No, he rather thought somehow that it would be Stirling. He seemed the most likely man of the three.

Suddenly the prison bell clanged through the vast building, and the chaplain started up with a jerk from his seat. Perhaps this would be the clergyman the Bishop had chosen.

He heard the steps of the warder coming up the long stone corridor that led to his room. He hastened across the floor to receive his visitor. A knock came at the door, and he called, 'Come in' in a voice that trembled a little.

The door opened, and the warder stepped aside to allow a little old man with a bent silvery head to enter the room. He withdrew at once before the chaplain could recover from his astonishment, before he could even take the outstretched hand of his visitor.

The beautiful voice he remembered so well said humbly: 'I promised you, my friend, an old and experienced priest. I am in your hands. If you think that description applies to me, I ask of you to let me endeavour to do my poor best in your place. If, of course, you would prefer me to send another——'

'Oh my Lord!'

That was all the chaplain could say. He stood there, his big red face working, his hands twitching nervously, and although he struggled for words, none came.

After a moment or two, the Bishop touched him gently on the arm.

'My friend, we have not much time. Remember that the King's business requireth haste.'

And at that the prison chaplain raised his head. Very humbly he offered his arm to his visitor. And the two men walked slowly down the long stone corridor together.



### THE RUNNING BROOKS.

- The Sea Witch* : Alexander Laing (Thornton Butterworth, 8s. 6d. n.).  
*The Farm* : Louis Bromfield (Cassell, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Love Provoked* : Rhys Davies (Putnam, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*In Scotland Again* : H. V. Morton (Methuen, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Characters and Commentaries* : Lytton Strachey (Chatto & Windus, 10s. 6d. n.).  
*Letters of Byron* : Selected by R. G. Howarth with an introduction by André Maurois (Dent, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Everybody's Lamb* : Edited by A. C. Ward (Bell, 10s. 6d. n.).  
*The English Galaxy* : Chosen by Gerald Bullett (Dent, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*The Albatross Book of Living Verse* : Edited by Louis Untermeyer (Collins, 5s. n.).  
*The Winding Stair* : W. B. Yeats (Macmillan, 6s. n.).  
*The Avatars. A Futurist Fantasy* : A. E. (Macmillan, 6s. n.).

To swim back into reality from the compelling atmosphere of a good book is a pleasure not easily forgotten. There is no need to be familiar with the subject of a capable writer to recognise his capability. A breeze stirs and, in this first instance, the mist dissolves from the tangled spars of the crowded shipping at New York's water-front and a world is awake. To say one is compelled to read on to the end is to emphasise a certain lack of depth in the matter under the eye, for the best novels are built up by a series of cumulative climaxes and significantly interwoven actions that demand pauses for the mind to luxuriate under the influence of an excitement, a sorrow, a pang, a breathless wonder at the might of elementals and a vital sympathy with the fate of men. *The Sea Witch* is the book of a master. It has a sense of time ; it is a vivid and compelling reconstruction of a period ; it works inwards from a wide interplay of events and historical happenings to an intense and inevitably tragic climax. The story is set in the expansive days of commercial enterprise of the early years of the nineteenth century, when the clipper ships were being born to live their swift and beautiful lives over the trade courses from New York to China. *The Sea Witch*, swiftest and most beautiful of all the clippers, rides through the novel with a glamour and a presence as vital as any of the humans who man her. Bound up with her fate is that of the proud Captain, dashing man of the world, resourceful, capable, sometimes immense in his power of command, a figure of heroic self-dependence, and that of his young brother the sculptor, creator of the ship's figure-head in which, expressing the needs of his soul completely, he is irrevocably bound captive to his

own creation. There are excitements of all kinds and a subtle portrayal of a woman wedded to one brother and loved by the other, with all three of them bound to the sea. Never, in all the inevitable situations that arise in a tale of the sea, does the author fail, never is action too wild or horror too revolting and never is unhappy love strained into sentimentalities. It is a long novel and it is a full novel, rich with events and characters, and it is a work of quivering imagination.

Equally as imaginative, and equally as suggestive of a period is *The Farm*, a long, closely written family chronicle of New England agricultural life, from the closing of the eighteenth century to the present day. Humanity, sprawling in colonisation over a virgin land, develops the prolific powers of multiplication that Nature possesses. When the Colonel, symbol of the widespread movement of pioneers, rode into the little clearing with his two servants, he had no vision of the huge procession of the posterity that would follow him until scattered by the hungry surge of industrialism and the complete uprooting of agrarian stock. This, naturally, is not a 'quick' book. Events are taken with their results, people are crowded into the panorama of a century and a quarter, but the narrative is never congested. Mr. Bromfield has a sense of atmosphere and he writes with a continuous subtlety of events breeding events that is half the secret of creative work, giving a continuity of background and the thread of emotion which is human life.

*Love Provoked* suffers from a complete lack of background. It depends on nothing more than emotionalism for its effects. Each story turns drearily and regrettably upon sex, and shows a strange disregard of the other treasures with which Earth fills her lap.

In contrast, when Earth, always bountiful, and History, as prolific of little treasures as Nature herself, are brought into conjunction and use a joint store-house for their treasure, the thief who sees his opportunity can easily break through and steal! And he is condoned by the majority of us who are most observant through another person's eyes. Mr. H. V. Morton has been *In Scotland Again* and, in his vivid, direct way, he gives us history, anecdote, wit and wise sayings all jumbled together to exercise that peculiar charm on the interest of the reader that an old countrywoman's button bag does on the interest of her grandchildren. And there is something of the same charm of the easy mastery of detail in *Characters and Commentaries*, but here the detail has been selected by a critical, analytical and penetrating mind,—a mind served to its utmost possibilities by a

style to delight the purist. This book is a selection of Mr. Strachey's work covering most of his writing life and includes the unfinished essay on Othello on which he was engaged at the time of his death. His subjects are mostly literary and it seems that extracts from his essays might have been intended to introduce the *Letters of Byron* and *Everybody's Lamb*. Of Byron's letters he says—and the style of this, written in 1905, is very little different from his most mature work—'he is never ingenious, or polished, or ornamental. His nearest approach to an epigram is a bad pun. He rushes on helter-skelter, as the fancy takes him, into postscripts longer than his letters, and post-postscripts longer than all. His vocabulary is often coarse; his constructions are liable to lose themselves in the current of his thoughts; he is always amusing, but he is very rarely polite,' and of Lamb:—'*The Essays of Elia* are, of course, rich; but the letters occasionally soar off into even more wonderful regions of fooling—regions where the absurd and the serious, the jovial and the pathetic, the true and the false, seem to be inextricably fused together to form one enchanting whole.' M. André Maurois introduces the one-volume collection of Byron's correspondence which is handy in size though running to four hundred and fifty pages and containing more than two hundred and eighty of the famous letters. This very well-chosen selection, taken from the whole of the published material, covers the entire lifetime of the poet. Coming as if to companion this is *Everybody's Lamb*, a collection of the essays of Elia, letters and miscellaneous prose deliciously and, it seems, inevitably illustrated by E. H. Shepherd. These lovable things are grouped under convenient headings, and do succeed, as the introduction claims, 'to re-unite Lamb and Elia—to bring together again somewhat as in life the man and his familiar' and many a letter and essay are shown to have root in one day's particular whimsicalities.

While the spirit of anthologies is on us come two books of verse, *The English Galaxy* which claims to be 'an attempt to supplement the best existing anthologies by providing in a small compass a large representative collection of exclusively shorter poems covering the whole field of English verse from its beginning till 1900'; and the *Albatross Book of Living Verse* which claims 'to bring the poetry of our time into one harmonious perspective with the preceding seven centuries of English verse, while the inclusion of many poems of fair length avoids the narrow impression of other anthologies.' The first book is a delight. In matter, and in production and in arrangement it is most pleasing, and it keeps within the bounds that any good

anthology lays down for itself, that of compression and level excellence and a sense of balance ; and the adventurous individuality of its compiler gives it a freshness of its own. Mr. Untermeyer's book is reminiscent of most other anthologies. There seems little advantage to be gained by the indiscriminate mixing of long poems with short, and any contemporary anthologist who omits, willingly or otherwise, any example of the work of such established poets as Alfred Noyes, Edward Shanks, Gordon Bottomley, Lascelles Abercrombie and Laurence Binyon, to name but five, and includes this

Just now  
 Out of the strange  
 Still dusk . . . as strange, as still . . .  
 A white moth flew. Why am I grown  
 So cold ?

cannot be said to have succeeded.

And there is a strange feeling of omission around *The Winding Stair*—a sense of loss and a preoccupation with things that jar as if imagination were made sterile by effort. Yet against this *The Avatars*, also the work of a man of ripe years, is a glowing book building an intense belief, not so much in a beyond as in a splendid and attainable world just a little distant. The sunset of life truly has here given mystical lore and also the power of creating what is beyond ordinary sight. This is mysticism offered as the salvation of the Iron Age—a salvation only possible by the renunciation of materialism for the intense and transcendental worship of spiritual beauty. Mr. Russell brings his avatars to earth and gives them worshippers in a community of artists, and uses them as symbols of the proximity of the divine to souls brought into tune by a long and imaginative worship of beauty. Musician, poet, sculptor, painter, each by his own particular creed works to the same faith and each is conceived fully with the wide complications that the ripe wisdom of the author is so capable of. The limpidity, directness and sparkling powers of conjuration of his style make it almost like a bible containing the gospel wrung out of a lifetime's striving towards a complete and perfect appreciation of the infinite qualities of what is lovely, and it is all overlaid with a sensitiveness to spiritual associations so acute that the visions and immortal presences to which he gives breath are as vivid and as tangible as—well, perhaps as angels were in one's childhood.

## THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITIONS.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 122.

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

'A brighter —— rears its mountains  
From waves serener far'

'And ——, which was dead, is arisen!'

1. 'O'er this fair fountain —— the sky,  
Now spangled with rare stars.'
2. 'Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an —— fleeing.'
3. '—— was the name her love had chosen,  
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew.'
4. 'A ——, which those whom love has taught to play  
Make music on.'
5. 'I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,  
Then with unwilling steps I wander down  
Into the clouds of the —— even.'
6. 'The mountain shepherds came,  
Their garlands ——.'

*The above quotations are all taken from Shelley's Poetical Works.*

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page iii of the cover of this issue: and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 122 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than December 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

THE 'CORNHILL' LITERARY COMPETITION.

No. 5.

THE Editor offers two prizes for the best rhymed epitaphs of not more than eight lines, on the year 1933. The two winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of one guinea from John Murray's catalogue.

Answers will not be opened until January 20, to enable readers living abroad to compete. Envelopes containing them should be addressed to the Competition Editor and be marked '5' in the left hand corner, and must contain the coupon that is printed on page iii of the cover of this issue.

Acrostic 120. 'Rose-Mary.' The prizes are won by Mrs. Gubbins, Hatchetts, Novington, Dover, and Mrs. G. F. Williams, 47 Iverna Court, Kensington, W.8. Their answers were the first two opened, and they will choose books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue.







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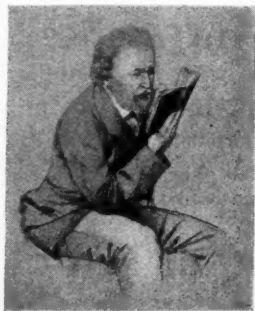
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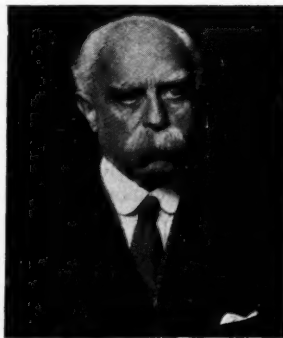
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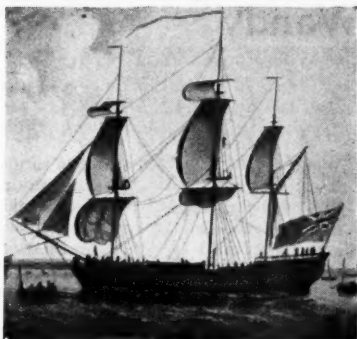
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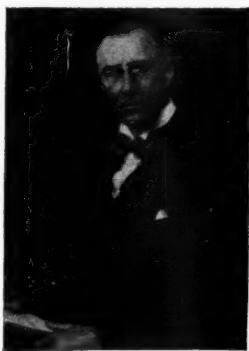
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